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Andrew C. Denson


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Daniel C. Littlefield

  
Instructor in Charge

APPROVED: 

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF..... History

**Indians, Traders  
and the  
British Stalemate in the Illinois Country  
1763-1774**

by

**Andrew C. Denson**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

- BWM** Baynton, Wharton and Morgan papers, Illinois Historical Survey, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- IHC** Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library.
- JP** Papers of Sir William Johnson.
- MPHC** Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections.

## INTRODUCTION

Remote, unprofitable, and filled with enemies. For the British, these were the terms which described the Illinois country in the years between the close of the Seven Years War and the outbreak of the American revolution. While the acquisition of the territory from the French in 1763 had inspired in many British minds visions of fur-trade wealth or new, prosperous Mississippi river colonies or at least a secure and stable border land between the settlements of the east and the enemies to the west, the Illinois country under the British regime never amounted to much more than a source of aggravation and disappointment for both the home government and the individual British subjects who resided or carried on business in the region. The territory's settlements remained the sparsely populated, French-dominated backwaters that the British found upon their first arrival, while the British empire never saw the economic benefits expected from the new possession, which was thought to have been a valuable region for the French. Furthermore, the area in several ways remained hostile territory for the British. The newcomers were never able to reconcile all of the Illinois country's Indians to the British presence in the territory, and Indian violence and the threat of full Indian war continued to be a very real part of Illinois life throughout the British decade. Elements in the French population also continued to act in ways which undermined the authority of their old imperial enemies. Meanwhile, the British of their own volition weakened their

position in the territory by reducing their military presence. By the beginning of the Revolution, the Illinois country's main military installation had been dismantled, along with its supply base in Pennsylvania, and only a handful of British regulars still occupied the region. The plans of both imperial authorities and individual British subjects for the Illinois country stalled early and remained stalled, and, when the George Rogers Clark expedition in 1778 gave the territory to the rebelling colonies, there existed little to show for the decade of British rule.

Britain's great problem in the Illinois country was one of control. Different individuals discovered the root of British misfortunes in different places, but the fundamental condition of the regime in Illinois was the British inability to dominate the territory and impose upon it any of the several visions entertained by British subjects. Imperial officials could not order the Illinois country to their satisfaction. British traders could not control the region's commerce. The British military never found itself in a position whereby it could exert authority over the countryside. Part of this problem stemmed from the fact that different parties of British involved in the Illinois country acted according to conflicting agendas. In particular, the regulations established by imperial officials for trade, inspired in part by a mercantilist concern for making the territory profitable for the Empire, conflicted with the actions of individual traders searching for personal profit. Furthermore, although the British won the Seven Years War, remnants of the groups which contested for hegemony in

the North American interior--the French and, more importantly, the various Indian groups--continued to exert influence in the Illinois country. In a sense, the British never completed the victory they won between 1754 and 1763. In the Illinois country, at least, the effort to secure a North American empire continued, and it was left to the next regime in Illinois, the American, to realize the benefits of the British conquest.

This paper presents a discussion of the conditions outlined above. The author is concerned with detailing the complex situation whereby the actions of British authorities and British subjects were rendered ineffectual. Groups of Indians, Spanish officials, and French inhabitants all exerted influence in the Illinois country and receive treatment in the pages ahead. The paper begins with a general discussion of events and conditions in North America after the close of the Seven Years War and how they more specifically related to the Illinois country. It then moves on to observe in some detail the two most important endeavors through which the British attempted to dominate the territory: the trade with Indians for skins and furs, the Illinois country's most vital economic activity, and Indian relations in general.

"The Illinois country" in this paper refers not only to the area now known as the state of Illinois, but to the immediate region on both sides of the Mississippi river roughly between the mouth of the Ohio river and the present state of Wisconsin. As such, the Illinois country

included both British Illinois and the Spanish territory to the west of the Mississippi. During the British regime, settlement in the Illinois country was concentrated in a number of villages on the Mississippi river between the mouths of the Ohio and Illinois rivers. Kaskaskia, on the Mississippi tributary of the same name, was the largest village in the British territory, followed by the settlement around Fort de Chartres, about eighteen miles north of Kaskaskia. In between these two villages was the small settlement of Prairie du Rocher, while St. Philippe, even smaller, lay to the north of the fort. Cahokia, slightly smaller than the village around the fort, was the Northernmost settlement, situated across from the mouth of the Missouri river. Not on the Mississippi river but still considered part of the Illinois country, Vincennes or Post St. Vincent lay on the Wabash river 180 miles above its confluence with the Ohio. On the Spanish side of the Mississippi, Ste. Genevieve was situated on the river somewhat north of Kaskaskia, while St. Louis, founded in 1764 but growing rapidly during the years prior to the American Revolution, lay still further north. Just before the outbreak of the Seven Years War, the inhabitants of the Illinois country numbered about 1,600, including slaves.<sup>1</sup>

This paper takes as one of its main sources the records and correspondence left by Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, a company of Philadelphia merchants who invested heavily in a number of ventures in the Illinois country. As such, a brief word about the company's pursuits is in order here. Soon after the close of the Seven Years War,



Samuel Wharton, encouraged by the influential Indian agent George Croghan, conceived of a broad plan for his company to move quickly into Britain's new interior possessions and engross as much as possible of the Northwest's trade. Envisioning new British colonies as markets for company merchandize or at least expecting easy profits in the skin and fur trade, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan sent their first shipment of goods to Illinois in 1766, and later that year George Morgan, the company's junior partner, took up residence in the Illinois country in order to oversee the company's ventures personally.<sup>2</sup>

Baynton, Wharton and Morgan hoped to find profits in four general ways. First, they felt they could dominate the Illinois country's skin and fur trade with their superior and plentiful British merchandize. They also felt that this merchandize would allow them to control the trade with the territory's French inhabitants. They hoped that they could win a contract to supply the British garrisons stationed in Illinois, and, finally, they planned on supplying the imperial Indian administration with the goods it distributed to the Indians as presents.<sup>3</sup> From the beginning of its Illinois operations, however, the company over-extended its capital in establishing a transportation system for shipping goods to the territory and in purchasing the goods, themselves, and the partners quickly found themselves cash-poor and unable to fund their debts. In the autumn of 1767, the company's creditors granted it three years in which to establish itself and find success, but none of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's Illinois interests turned out to be profitable enough to sustain the business.

The trade with the Indians for skins and furs and with the French inhabitants never lived up to the partners' sanguine expectations, while the company failed to secure its military supply contract, and the Indian administration was forced to curtail its activities in the face of calls for imperial economic retrenchment. The company's last chance was the establishment of a new British colony in Illinois, which would provide many more consumers for the company's goods and result in a great demand for the land that George Morgan had been quietly accumulating. Samuel Wharton, along with many others, lobbied vigorously for the creation of such a colony, but the home government never acted upon the idea. In 1770, Morgan began negotiations to sell all of his company's goods remaining in Illinois to Moses Franks and company, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's main rivals in the region, through Franks's agent William Murray. Over the next few years, the company worked to settle and conclude all of its business in the Illinois country.<sup>4</sup>

The scope of the company's activities and its presence in the territory throughout most of the British decade make Baynton, Wharton and Morgan a valuable source of information. The company's papers record not only its own business failure, but the problems faced by the British, in general, in the Illinois country.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> IHC, 10:3-5, Aubry's account of Illinois, 1763; IHC, 29:481, Macarty to Rouille, February 1, 1752.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Sutton, "George Morgan, Early Illinois Businessman," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 69 (August, 1976), 175; Max Savelle, *George Morgan, Colony Builder* (New York, 1932), 23.

<sup>3</sup>Sutton, 177.

<sup>4</sup>Savelle, 39-52, 73-74.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The British in the Illinois Country

Great Britain gained possession of the Illinois country as part of the settlement that ended the Seven Years' War. The Treaty of Paris, ratified in February, 1763, awarded to Britain all of France's North American territory east of the Mississippi river, with the important exception of the strip of land upon which New Orleans was located. The French ceded that city and all of their possessions west of the Mississippi to Spain. The Illinois Country, however, was not actually occupied by British troops until over two years later, when a detachment of about one hundred soldiers commanded by Captain Thomas Stirling formally relieved a small French garrison at Fort de Chartres near the Mississippi river. This long delay was occasioned by the outbreak, in May, 1763, of the Indian war known as Pontiac's uprising, in which a broad confederation of northwestern Indian groups attempted to drive the British from the interior. Even after events in that war began to turn against them, many of these Indian groups remained reluctant to accept the withdrawal of the French and the new British dominance in their country. Between 1763 and Stirling's arrival in October, 1765, only a small handful of British emissaries succeeded in making the dangerous journey to Fort de Chartres, and even these minor successes were due largely to the efforts of French officials and army officers and, in several cases, the Indian leader Pontiac, who protected the British agents from Indian

attack. In the summer of 1765, the Indian trader turned Indian agent George Croghan negotiated a general peace with most of the western groups, and this settlement opened the way for Stirling's mission, which represented the final defeat and fragmentation of the Indian confederacy and the occupation of the last French posts in the ceded territory.<sup>1</sup>

In so far as the British now occupied all of their newly won possessions, Britain's victory in North America had been fully realized. The suppression of the Indian uprising, however, did not mark the end of Britain's troubles in the west. The British now needed to control and manage the interior in such a way that British subjects and the British empire would benefit from the war-time acquisitions, and this proved to be a very difficult task. By the time Stirling made his mission to Fort de Chartres, the home government and imperial officials had erected a system of management for the new possessions based upon the goals of gaining profits for the Empire from trade in the interior and keeping the new territories peaceful and secure by avoiding disruptions with the Indians. The system, however, quickly proved unable to meet these goals, rather it created a number of contentious issues between interior inhabitants and imperial authorities. The question of how best to manage and use the western territories plagued the British government and British subjects throughout the years prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution.

The imperial plan for the management of the North American interior was based upon three general policies. First, a sizeable force of regular British troops was to be kept garrisoned in the new territories to ensure the functioning of imperial authority. In part, this policy represented a reaction to problems British authorities experienced in prosecuting the Seven Years War. During the war, the home government called upon the several colonies to contribute to the North American war effort. The British army requisitioned men, money and supplies from the colonial legislatures and administrations. For imperial authorities, this system proved unwieldy and inefficient. The home government frequently experienced trouble raising money for the war effort from the colonies, and the colonial legislatures sometimes balked at providing troops for military actions which they considered unimportant to their own colonies' interests. As British victories in North America removed the immediate danger of enemy attack, some colonies began to cut back on their contributions, despite the responsibilities involved in occupying vast quantities of newly captured territory. The difficulties created by the war-time requisition system convinced the home government and the leaders of the army, at the war's conclusion, that the North American interior needed a defense establishment which would not have to depend upon the cooperation of the colonial legislatures. To this end, the North American Commander-in-Chief, General Jeffrey Amherst, divided the interior into a number of military districts and worked to establish a series of forts garrisoned with British regular troops.

Imperial authorities, alone, controlled and were responsible for these garrisons. Pontiac's uprising disrupted Amhearst's effort, but the home government ordered Amhearst's successor, General Thomas Gage, to maintain the form of Amhearst's plan once the forts could be reoccupied.<sup>2</sup> Captain Stirling's occupation of Fort de Chartres marked the completion of this plan.

The restriction of colonial expansion into the West formed the second element of the home government's system of management for the new British possessions. The Proclamation of 1763 ordered that private land acquisitions west of a line drawn down the crest of the Appalachian mountains be prohibited without royal approval. The new territories, at least for the present, would be left for the Indians and the merchants with whom they traded. This policy reflected the need for the British to maintain good relations with the western Indians, whose resentment over white encroachments upon their lands had threatened British war-time alliances and had contributed to the outbreak of Pontiac's uprising. The stability of the North American interior depended upon the Indians' being reconciled to the British presence, so any expansion west of the established colonies demanded extreme caution to avoid alienating Indian groups.<sup>3</sup> The policy also served to consign the territories to the traders who dealt with Indians for skins and furs, commodities expected to provide British subjects and the British empire with great wealth. Towards these ends, the home government sealed off, at least temporarily, territories like the Illinois country from large-scale British settlement.

Finally, the general system for the management of the West provided for the centralized regulation of Indian affairs and the trade between whites and Indians for skins and furs, which formed the interior's most lucrative commercial pursuit. Like the restriction on interior settlement, this policy grew out of the two goals of making the interior a source of profit for the Empire and maintaining peaceful relations with the western Indians. During the last years of the war with France, the British Indian superintendent for the northern district, Sir William Johnson, frequently pointed out the close connection between trade and the maintenance of the British Indian alliances. Johnson felt that properly regulated trade could win over to the British side the Indian groups who were yet favorable towards the French. In 1761, he drew up a list of regulations for a number of western forts that the army had recently opened up for the Indian trade. All trading was to take place at the forts, themselves, and all traders were required to possess a royal license. The commanders of the various posts, in turn, were charged with overseeing the trade and making certain that the Indians were treated fairly.<sup>4</sup> These regulations eventually formed the nucleus of the Board of Trade's official post-war plan for the regulation of Indian affairs, issued in July, 1764. In this plan, the imperial government assumed full control over the regulation of the Indian trade. The Board reaffirmed the offices of two superintendents, one each for northern and southern districts, and it charged these superintendents with setting up subordinate agents, or commissaries, at the posts in their respective



jurisdictions. The Board restricted trading to the posts, where the commissaries could observe<sup>4</sup> it, but it offered to license any British subject who wanted to engage in the trade. The plan prohibited trading in alcohol and reiterated the injunction against the acquisition of Indian lands without imperial permission and oversight. Finally, the Board proposed that a new tax on the proceeds of the trade be levied to meet the expenses of the program.<sup>5</sup> This plan, since it involved the creation of a new tax, required that Parliament take action upon it. This was never done, but the Board of Trade instructed William Johnson and John Stuart, reconfirmed in their positions as superintendents of the northern and southern districts respectively, to carry out the details of the program to the greatest extent possible.<sup>6</sup>

Here, then, were the policies with which the British imperial authorities attempted to manage the Illinois country after 1763. Under this program, Illinois was to serve two functions. It would provide an area in which skin and fur traders could operate, and it would be preserved, at least for the time being, as Indian country. The restriction on settlement would allow the British to avoid the alienation of Indian groups produced by white encroachments on Indian land, while it would leave the territory open for the endeavors of traders, whose activities were expected to result in great profits for the Empire. Similarly, the trade regulations established in 1764 would allow British officials to oversee the commerce so as to ensure that traders, on one hand, did nothing to anger the Indians who came to them with pelts and, on the other, that they carried on their business

in ways which kept the region's skins and furs flowing to Britain. This second consideration was of particular importance in British Illinois, since the territory lay on the boundary with Spanish lands. With Spanish villages just across the Mississippi river and with the river, itself, providing a means of passage to Spanish New Orleans, the location of British Illinois offered traders the opportunity of selling their pelts, if economically expedient, to Great Britain's commercial and political rivals. The imperial program applied to territories like the Illinois country, then, combined a mercantilist concern for making the interior profitable to the Empire with the practical necessity of keeping groups of interior Indians well-disposed towards the British.

In all three elements of the program, Illinois confronted the British with problems. Many British who arrived soon after occupation, for instance, felt that the military presence in the territory was too small. Although Croghan had negotiated peace with the various Indian groups and the last remnants of the French military had withdrawn, the British remained in an insecure position in Illinois. British officers and traders felt threatened by the presence of French inhabitants both in British territory and across the Mississippi river. They believed that French traders, hoping to retain their commercial dominance in the area, had been responsible for inciting the Indians' resistance to occupation. Lieutenant John Ross, one of the emissaries who had reached Fort de Chartres prior to Stirling's mission, had witnessed French traders urging Indians to continue the war against the British.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a group of Illinois Indians had told Croghan in the summer

of 1765 that the French had warned them of a British plan to steal the Illinois' land and give it to the Cherokee, a group allied with Britain.<sup>8</sup> Just prior to British occupation, a number of French merchants had withdrawn from Illinois to the west side of the Mississippi river, and it was believed that they meant to keep the trade to themselves and encourage the Indians to break the peace settlement.<sup>9</sup> Late in 1765, William Johnson reported to the Lords of Trade that these Frenchmen were, in fact, trading extensively in British territory and that they were doing so with the help of their co-nationals still residing to the east of the Mississippi.<sup>10</sup> With such enemies thought to be lurking about, many British felt that the Illinois country required a stronger military presence. Croghan and General Gage favored the construction of a new fort on the Mississippi at the mouth of the Illinois river. This new post would seal off the illegal traders' main highway into British territory.<sup>11</sup> Of course, during this time, illegal trade was also carried on between the French on the west side of the Mississippi and British traders to the east, and a new fort would have intercepted some of this commerce, as well.<sup>12</sup> British authorities, however, did little to increase their military strength in the region. The garrison at Fort de Chartres was reinforced in 1765, but the British never built the proposed fort or took any other significant measure to strengthen their military presence in the Illinois country.<sup>13</sup>

The second element in the plan for managing the West, the restriction of land acquisitions west of the "proclamation line," also proved a source of trouble in Illinois, since the British occupation

inspired in some visions of a new colony. In 1763, even before the Illinois country was in British possession, a group of Virginia and Maryland landlords formed the Mississippi Company and drafted a memorial requesting a two and one half million acre land grant at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. They stressed to the home government the benefits a new colony would provide in the defense of the West and as a market for British manufactured goods. The Proclamation of 1763 and the accompanying ministerial opposition to western settlement, however, led them to set aside their plans.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, General Gage desired the creation of a small military colony around the Fort de Chartres, with tracts of land to be granted in return for military service or other obligations to the Crown. Gage believed that the 17th-century French had arrived in Illinois before the Indians, who only later had fled to the French territory from marauding Iroquois to the east. Thus, Gage believed that the British, as conquerors of the French, had prior claim to the French lands and could settle them without injustice to the Indians.<sup>15</sup> The home government did not act upon Gage's suggestion, but 1766 saw a similar plan surface with the organization of the Illinois Company, whose membership included Governor William Franklin of New Jersey, Sir William Johnson, George Croghan, and the trading partners John Baynton, Samuel Wharton, and George Morgan.<sup>16</sup> These men hoped to create a colony out of lands purchased from French inhabitants in Illinois. With the help of Benjamin Franklin in London, they set out to lobby vigorously the home government on behalf of

their plan. They came near to success in 1767, when Lord Shelburne, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, adopted their plan as part of a larger revision of imperial policy, but a reorganization of the cabinet which took Shelburne out of power and an accompanying shift in policy sidetracked the Illinois Company's plan, and it was later superseded by the campaign of many of the same men to secure a land grant for a colony in the Ohio valley.<sup>17</sup> Although none of the various plans for colonizing the Illinois country succeeded prior to the Revolution, the desire on the part of British Illinois inhabitants for land and new settlement formed a great point of contention with imperial authorities throughout the British period.

The third element of the imperial system of management, the regulation of Indian affairs and the Indian trade, provided British authorities and traders in Illinois with the greatest amount of trouble. Indeed, Indian and trade issues often fueled the demands already described for a stronger military presence and for more extensive settlement. As already suggested, both security and successful commerce demanded that British officials and traders maintain friendly relations with at least some of the region's Indian groups. Such amity would encourage Indians to trade their furs and skins with licensed traders at the posts, rather than with illegal traders in the interior or with the French to the west of the Mississippi. The products of this illegal trade generally did not go to British ports, but rather flowed through New Orleans to France or Spain.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, a healthy, equitable commerce between Indians and British traders

would encourage peaceful relations between the Indian groups and the British, in general, and, as such, help maintain the security of the western territories.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to fair trade, the distribution of presents to the Indians was necessary if good relations were to be maintained. Croghan stated in 1764:

The Expense of giving favours to the many additional Tribes of Indians as are now in alliance with Great Britain since the Reduction of Canada must be considerable, but I dare say, it will be found the cheapest and best method in the End to cultivate a friendship with them in this manner.<sup>20</sup>

Typical Indian presents included metal goods like knives and kettles, guns and ammunition to aid in hunting and war, and textile goods like blankets and clothing. The French had long benefited from this practice of gift-giving, and during the Seven Years' War British officials likewise had used gift-distribution in making and maintaining Indian alliances.<sup>21</sup> When the British arrived in Illinois, Indian parties began to come to them asking for presents.<sup>22</sup> Indian trade, Indian alliances, and Indian presents were inextricably bound together.

In 1766, Croghan came to the Illinois country and negotiated at Fort de Chartres a second treaty with most of the western Indian groups.<sup>23</sup> The same year, William Johnson sent Edward Cole to Illinois as Indian commissary. Cole immediately began to distribute Indian presents, most of his merchandize being purchased from George Morgan, at such a rate that the Crown owed Baynton, Wharton and Morgan over £1,500 New York currency (about £900 sterling) within three months. While much of this outlay was related to

Croghan's large peace conference, General Gage was stunned by the magnitude of Cole's purchases and estimated a £10,000 New York (about £6,000 sterling) bill for a full year's gift-giving.<sup>24</sup> In defending his actions, Cole stated that disreputable French traders were trafficking goods in British Illinois at very low prices in the hope of damaging the British Indian alliances. He told Johnson, "the Country must either be kept by force of Arms, or by being on good terms with the Indians, which latter cannot be done without Expense," and he pointed out that many Indians would be returning to him in the Spring, when he would be forced to distribute more presents. In the same letter, Cole admitted having allowed a number of traders, both British and Illinois French, to visit and winter in Indian villages. This action directly violated the 1764 plan, but Cole asserted that if these traders were forced to wait for the Indians to come to the posts with their skins and furs, "the other side of the River would take all the Trade."<sup>25</sup>

Here was a clear statement of the British predicament in Illinois. The imperial program, aimed at avoiding disruptions with the Indians and ensuring that the profits of the trade flowed to Great Britain, required that trade be carried on at the posts under the eyes of British officials. Yet if traders stayed within these imperial regulations, they might never win the trade, and the Indian friendship which came with the trade, in the first place. The British military presence in Illinois was never large enough to enforce uniform obedience to the regulations, and, as long as significant numbers of traders still carried

on their business away from British officials, a great many Indians would never trade at the posts and the expected benefits of the post-only rule could not be realized. Similarly, while security and trade in the Illinois country demanded that the British authorities establish and maintain Indian alliances, the price of these alliances in presents threatened to be more than the Illinois country was worth. As time went on, Cole continued to distribute large amounts of merchandize, and at one point General Gage refused to honor the bills Cole drew upon him for Baynton, Wharton and Morgan.<sup>26</sup>

Cole's problems in Illinois were part of a larger set of difficulties confronting the British in the West, as a whole. Put simply, the system of careful, central regulation erected after the war failed on almost all points. British hunters and farmers, for instance, violated the restriction on settlement and took lands west of the line laid down in the Proclamation of 1763. Attempts were made to evict some of these settlers, but with only minor success. The colonial administrations on the east coast did little to enforce the ban on unauthorized settlements, and General Gage suspected that some colonial leaders actually aided the squatters.

The regulation of Indian trade and affairs met with even less success. Traders disliked being confined to the posts, and French traders from across the Mississippi continued to invade British territory to do business with the Indians at their villages. Traders in British possessions defied the 1764 regulations by purchasing their pelts outside of the posts--sometimes with the sanction of colonial



authorities, as when Guy Carleton, the governor of Canada, issued licenses authorizing traders to deal with Indians at their villages. The skins and furs purchased outside of the posts often were not transported to British markets, but rather went through New Orleans to France or Spain. Johnson's commissaries, for their part, worked to maintain Indian alliances through gift-giving and, in the process, elicited complaints from imperial officials who found their generosity too great.<sup>27</sup>

The home government's difficulties in raising North American revenue, meanwhile, greatly exacerbated western problems. The violations of imperial policy just mentioned, if anything, demanded increased expenditures for such projects as evicting squatters and building forts to intercept the illegal trade. In the years following the repeal of the Stamp Act, however, retrenchment was the message that issued from the home government. Furthermore, unrest in the eastern colonies came to overshadow the need to maintain stability and strength in the West, since the revenue necessary to meet the home government's original western goals could not be raised without inciting resistance in the colonies.<sup>28</sup> To escape this trap, the home government in 1768 revised its policies. In March of that year, the Lords of Trade issued a report recommending that the regulation of Indian trade be returned to the several colonies to do with as they saw fit. The Lords suggested that the Indian superintendents be retained to provide the Indians with someone to whom they could take their complaints but stipulated that the superintendents should

be kept to a strict budget and made to limit Indian presents. They rejected the idea of new western colonies but recommended that a new Indian boundary west of the proclamation line be negotiated to allow for some colonial expansion.<sup>29</sup> Based upon these recommendations, the ministry several weeks later approved a new policy aimed at reducing imperial expenses by relinquishing responsibility for the Indian trade and by allowing the military to evacuate some of the western garrisons. The home government also hoped it would be able to control eastern colonists more effectively by permitting some expansion while strictly enforcing the new Indian boundary.<sup>30</sup>

In Illinois, this policy change meant that Edward Cole lost his position as commissary and distributor of Indian presents and that land speculators began to lose interest in the restricted Illinois country and turn their attention to the territory opened up to the east. Furthermore, the change eliminated the prospects for an increased military presence in Illinois, and General Gage even suggested that the army withdraw from the territory completely.<sup>31</sup> In several ways, however, the situation in Illinois after 1768 remained the same before. Lieutenant Colonel John Wilkins, the new commander at Fort de Chartres, continued the practice of trying to manage the Indians with presents, although, having been ordered by Gage to reduce expenses, Wilkins' presents were not so large or frequent as Cole's. Wilkins' gifts often consisted of little more than large amounts of inexpensive alcohol, which allowed the commander to act generously

without spending too much of the Crown's money.<sup>32</sup> Wilkins and other Illinois British also continued to clamor for a strengthening of the territory's military. As late as 1769, Wilkins wrote to cabinet-member Lord Barrington in support of the idea of a new fort at the mouth of the Illinois river. He further suggested that new posts be built on the Wabash and Ohio rivers. Wilkins estimated that, with these new installations, 3,300 packs of peltry worth £53,900 sterling would be taken each year, some of these skins and furs coming from the Indians of the Spanish territory, who would be drawn to the British by the new posts.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the ministry's attitude against the creation of new interior colonies did not stop some Illinois British from speculating in lands. In 1768, George Morgan began to buy parcels of land from French inhabitants, and the next year Wilkins made land grants to Morgan, his partners, and several other men. Wilkins retained a one-sixth interest in these grants. General Gage, however, later refused to confirm them.<sup>34</sup>

A more serious challenge to imperial policy came several years later from Illinois merchant William Murray. On the basis of the York-Campden legal opinion, which stated that British subjects did not need royal approbation in purchasing land from natives in India, Murray helped to organize a new Illinois Land Company in early 1773. Believing that a contract with an Indian group was enough to validate a land purchase, Murray privately negotiated to buy land from the Indians living between the Wabash and Illinois rivers. Captain Hugh Lord, then commander in Illinois, told Murray he would not be

allowed to settle his lands and informed General Frederick Haldimand, the acting Commander-in-Chief in North America, of Murray's actions. In March of 1774, Haldimand issued a proclamation forbidding the private purchase of land from Indians and instructed Lord to declare Murray's deeds invalid. The Illinois Company, however, continued to work to secure Murray's purchases.<sup>35</sup>

The Illinois Company's illegal land speculation was indicative of the continued failure of imperial policy, in general. The home government had designed the 1768 changes to accommodate the eastern colonists' opposition to an American revenue and their desire for land, while maintaining western security and peace with the Indians. Yet, by the early 1770s, the situation in the West had not improved. First, the maintenance of garrisons continued to be too expensive for the home government, and, in late 1771, the ministry acted upon Gage's earlier suggestion and ordered the destruction of Fort de Chartres and its supply base Fort Pitt and the withdrawal of the soldiers stationed at those posts. Fifty men under Captain Lord were left in Kaskaskia at a post called Fort Gage to govern and maintain the security of the immediate area.<sup>36</sup> Second, the colonial legislatures failed to establish effective regulations for the Indian trade once responsibility for the trade returned to them. Attempts were made to hold an inter-colonial conference to discuss a general plan, but colonial indifference and reluctance on the part of the home government to allow a potentially rebellious meeting to take place kept such a conference from materializing. Individual colonial legislatures, meanwhile, balked at

erecting rules which might have rendered their merchants less competitive than those of other colonies, while the commanders of interior posts claimed that they lacked the means with which to control the traders. The result of all of this was chaos in the trade and frequent Indian complaints of cheating and abuse.<sup>37</sup>

With continued British encroachments upon Indian lands and the abuses of British traders came Indian attacks and rumors of a coming frontier war. In early 1771, word came that certain Shawnee and Delaware were trying to form a new confederation of northwestern Indians with which to attack the British in the Great Lakes region and Illinois.<sup>38</sup> Later that year, Gage reported that the Indians of eleven villages around the Wabash river and Lake Michigan were set to fall upon the Illinois country and to cut off passage down the Ohio river.<sup>39</sup> These expected attacks did not materialize, but in 1774 an Indian war finally did break out between groups of Shawnee and Virginians led by Governor Lord Dunmore over white encroachments upon Shawnee lands in Kentucky and the murder of a number of Shawnee by Virginia frontiersmen. Lord Dunmore's War, however, remained isolated to these two antagonists, a new Indian confederation having failed to materialize. Alone, the Shawnee were quickly defeated and forced to recognize the Virginians' claims to Kentucky lands.<sup>40</sup>

Just prior to the outbreak of Lord Dunmore's War, the home government shifted western policy for a second and final time with the passage of the Quebec Act, which extended the boundaries of Quebec to include most of the interior east and north of the Mississippi

and Ohio rivers. This had the effect of once again taking control over Indian affairs away from the eastern colonies. Unlike the easterners, the Canadians and Governor Guy Carleton had exhibited skill in dealing peacefully with the Indians, and it was hoped that Canadian management could return peace to the interior and reduce the flow of pelts from British territory to New Orleans. The Quebec Act was also meant to maintain the security of the interior following the withdrawal of much of the British military. With only a minimal armed presence in the West, it was now important that the French living in British territory be kept loyal. The act attempted to secure this loyalty by giving the French inhabitants civil government, providing for the toleration of catholicism, and establishing a body of law based upon French, as well as British, traditions. Finally, the act was aimed at preventing land speculation like that of William Murray by giving the interior to a colony concerned primarily with the fur trade and by securing French culture and law, which would discourage British settlement.<sup>41</sup> By 1774, then, the Illinois country had been largely abandoned by the British military and placed under a semi-French administration. The various schemes by British nationals to acquire and exploit Illinois lands had failed, and the commerce in pelts still was dominated by French traders. For a brief time before the American Revolution changed everything, it must have seemed in the Illinois country that the war for empire had been won by the French.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Clarence Alvord, *The Illinois Country, 1673-1818*, 261-264.
- <sup>2</sup>Jack Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 33-39, 72-73.
- <sup>3</sup>*ibid.*, 51.
- <sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, 39-40.
- <sup>5</sup>IHC, 10:273-281, "Plan for the Imperial Control of Indian Affairs," July 10, 1764.
- <sup>6</sup>Wayne Edson Stevens, *The Northwest Fur Trade* (Urbana, 1928), 23-24.
- <sup>7</sup>IHC, 10:483, Ross to Farmer, May 28, 1765.
- <sup>8</sup>*ibid.*, 11:42, Croghan's journal, August 18, 1765.
- <sup>9</sup>*ibid.*, 11:106, Eddingstone letter, October 17, 1765.
- <sup>10</sup>*ibid.*, 11: 120, Johnson to the Lords of Trade, November 16, 1765.
- <sup>11</sup>*ibid.*, 11:71, Gage to Halifax, August 10, 1765; *ibid.*, 11:491-492, Croghan to Gage, January 16, 1767.
- <sup>12</sup>*ibid.*, 11: 340, Gage to Conway, July 15, 1766.
- <sup>13</sup>Alvord, 295, for reinforcement of Fort de Chartres.
- <sup>14</sup>Clarence Carter, *Great Britain in the Illinois Country* (Urbana, 1908), 105-109.
- <sup>15</sup>Richard White, *The Middle Ground* (New York, 1991), 308.
- <sup>16</sup>IHC, 11:203-205, Agreement of the Illinois Company, March 29, 1766.

<sup>17</sup>Alvord, 289-292; Sosin, 141-145. This was the Vandalia Company scheme.

<sup>18</sup>Carter, 90.

<sup>19</sup>IHC, 11:53-54, Croghan to Johnson, November, 1765. Croghan discusses how trade acted as an important tie between the French and the Indians of Pontiac's uprising and speaks of the need for careful relations between the British and Indians.

<sup>20</sup>ibid., 10:258-259, Croghan to the Lords of Trade, June 8, 1764.

<sup>21</sup>White, 248.

<sup>22</sup>IHC, 11:109-110, Stirling to Gage, October 18, 1765.

<sup>23</sup>ibid., 11:485, Johnson to Shelburne, January 15, 1767.

<sup>24</sup>Alvord, 278. The conversions from New York currency to sterling, and the other currency conversions in this paper, come from a table drawn up by Max Savelle; Savelle, 33.

<sup>25</sup>BWM, Cole to Johnson, November 12, 1766.

<sup>26</sup>IHC, 16: 94-95, Cole to Johnson October 25, 1767.

<sup>27</sup>White, 318-320; for Johnson's original expectations, IHC, 10:327-342, Johnson on the Indian Department, October 8, 1764.

<sup>28</sup>Sosin, 4-5.

<sup>29</sup>IHC, 16:184-203, Lords of Trade report on Indian affairs, March 7, 1768.

<sup>30</sup>Sosin, 180.

<sup>31</sup>IHC, 11:319, Gage to Hillsborough, June 16, 1768. Gage suggested drawing all of the inhabitants into a single village, which would be fortified. A governor would be appointed and a council



elected by the inhabitants. A defensive militia would be organized, and then the military would withdraw.

<sup>32</sup>Colton Storm, "The Notorious Colonel Wilkins," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* 40 (March, 1947), 19-22; BWM, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's account for the Crown, 1770.

<sup>33</sup>IHC, 16:633-635, Wilkins to Barrington, December 5, 1769.

<sup>34</sup>Savelle, 59; IHC, 16:565, land grants from Wilkins, June 25, 1769.

<sup>35</sup>Sosin, 329-335.

<sup>36</sup>Alvord, 296-298.

<sup>37</sup>Sosin, 212-218.

<sup>38</sup>JP, 13:6-7, report of an Indian conspiracy, March 7, 1771.

<sup>39</sup>ibid., 8:343, Gage to Johnson, December 11, 1771.

<sup>40</sup>White, 357-364.

<sup>41</sup>Sosin, 240-248.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Spanish

For the British in the Illinois country, life was continually being complicated by the presence of rival Europeans just across the Mississippi river. British traders, *for instance*, saw the Spanish territory as a refuge for *lawless French merchants who invaded* British lands to steal the commerce in *skins and furs from its proper* practitioners. In *their Indian* relations, British authorities had to be concerned not *only with maintaining stability and peace* in the region, but with securing *allies in the event of an Anglo-Spanish war*. Spanish villages gave traders *the option of sending their pelts out of British* territory, an action *which violated imperial regulations*, while Spanish Indian presents could *undermine* the efforts of British officials to reduce their own gift-giving by providing Indian groups with the option of seeking goods across the river. The fact that British Illinois lay on an international boundary, then, exerted considerable influence over British actions and policies.

Like Great Britain, Spain after the Seven Years' War found itself in possession of vast new North American territory. By the first Treaty of Ildefonso, in 1762, and the Treaty of Paris the next year, France ceded to Spain the city of New Orleans and the French possessions west of the Mississippi river, including the small enclave across the river from what was now British Illinois. Thus, a new military and political frontier came into being between Britain and Spain, with

considerable strategic importance falling to the remote and sparsely populated territories of British and Spanish Illinois. Prior to the late 1750s, French success and expansion on the plains and in the Mississippi valley had kept the Spanish bottled up in New Mexico, and the suddenness of the territorial realignment left the Spanish groping for proper policies with which to manage the interior.<sup>1</sup>

The Spaniards' initial goals for the Illinois country were very similar to those of the British across the river. Spain needed to exercise military control over the new territory, establish and maintain alliances with the various Indian groups, and regulate trade so as to secure profit for the Spanish empire and avoid angering the Indians. In early 1767, the Spanish governor in New Orleans, Don Antonio de Ulloa, ordered the construction of forts on either side of the Missouri river near its confluence with the Mississippi. Ulloa believed that the British had penetrated Spanish territory by way of the unguarded river and were trying to ally themselves with the Indians of the adjacent area so as to be able to claim a right to the Missouri river later on. Also, Ulloa expected that Spain and Britain soon would be coming to some manner of open conflict, and he wanted the Spanish to be better able to defend their new possession.<sup>2</sup> The lowness of the land at the mouth of the Missouri and its propensity to flood with the spring freshets led Illinois Commandant Francisco Ris to modify Ulloa's instructions and construct a fort, named Don Carlos el Senor Principe de Asturias, on the south bank and only a small

blockhouse, Don Carlos Tercero el Rey, on the north. The Spanish had completed and occupied these posts by early 1769.<sup>3</sup>

The Spanish, needed to do more than build new military installations. It was vital that the new overlords gain and hold the friendship of the territory's Indians. Many experts, however, believed that this would prove a difficult task for the Spanish. In 1765, Charles Phillippe Aubry, the French governor waiting in New Orleans to hand over Louisiana to the Spanish, wrote, "All the nations of this continent know by hearsay about the cruelties which the Spaniards have practiced elsewhere in America and detest them generally." The Spanish were known for forcing the Indians of their territories to convert to Catholicism and for the harsh punishments they meted out to Indians who defied their will. Aubry predicted that such practices, if used in Louisiana, would drive Indian groups to the British. British officials, for their part, felt greatly relieved by news of the cession of Louisiana to Spain. They supposed that the Spanish would not be able to construct a set of Indian alliances capable of threatening British possessions.<sup>4</sup> The Spanish, however, proved to be more flexible in Indian affairs than expected. Governor Ulloa's instructions on the treatment of Indians in Illinois displayed an acute consciousness of the need to maintain friendly relations. "In what concerns the Savages," he wrote, "what they require is that they be treated as brothers, and that not the slightest affront, jest, or mockery be shown them." Ulloa advised the Illinois commandant not to carry out retribution for the Indians' offenses, but rather to complain to the

chiefs of the offending men. Furthermore, he suggested that nothing be done to contradict the Indians' belief that they held complete dominion over the land and merely suffered the Europeans to come among them.<sup>5</sup> In addition to this sort of respect and friendliness, the commandants of Spanish Illinois endeavored to mediate between warring Indian groups, and they continued their French predecessors' practice of distributing presents.<sup>6</sup> In this latter operation, the Spanish were generous enough that some Indians scorned the gifts of the British as stingy in comparison, and the British began to suspect a Spanish plot aimed at "setting the Indians against us."<sup>7</sup> During the tenure of Governor Alejandro O'Reilly, Spanish officials made a contract with the New Orleans firm of Maxent and Ranson to provide a regular supply of Indian presents for Spanish Illinois. In 1769, O'Reilly declared that the cost of Spanish gift distribution was reasonable and justified, and he expressed his general satisfaction with the tenor of Indian affairs.<sup>8</sup> The Spanish in Illinois, then, abandoned the harsh practices they had employed elsewhere in America and adopted policies aimed at securing Indian alliances through accommodation. They encountered difficulties, of course. Outbreaks of Indian violence against the white inhabitants of Spanish Illinois occurred, and several Indian groups remained hostile to these inhabitants throughout the period considered here.<sup>9</sup> The predictions that Spanish brutality and ineptitude would drive Indian groups to the British, however, did not come true. Rather, the Spanish presented

competition to British authorities in their efforts to secure Indian alliances

Like the British who formulated the imperial program for the interior, Spanish officials worked to ensure that the skin and fur trade in the Illinois country would prove a source of profit for the Spanish empire. In this pursuit, the Spanish possessed an asset in that, by the time Spanish troops occupied the territory many of the Illinois country's most able traders had left British Illinois to settle on the west side of the Mississippi. St. Louis, or Paincourt, was established in 1764 around a trading post owned by the merchant Pierre Laclede by Illinois French not wishing to become British subjects.<sup>10</sup> In 1766, British Captain Henry Gordon visited the town and found it thriving, and he suggested that British traders had reason to fear Laclede and the other Paincourt merchants, whom he believed to be working to engross the British territory's trade.<sup>11</sup> Some French migration west continued throughout the period of British rule, in part due to the inhabitants' dissatisfaction with their treatment under the British commanders.<sup>12</sup> The Spanish, then, benefited in Illinois from a population which was hostile to the British and which included men who could be expected to reap the full rewards of the Indian trade.

Soon after occupying the territory, Spanish officials set up trade regulations designed to ensure profits for the Empire and the good treatment of Indians. In 1767, Governor Ulloa ordered that all traders be licensed and that the prices of skins and furs be agreed upon and set. He instructed that all traders' boats should be made to dock at

one of the settlements, so that Spanish officials would be able to oversee the territory's commerce. Ulloa also ordered that no alcohol be sold to the Indians, nor firearms to those not already familiar with them.<sup>13</sup> Almost immediately, however, the Spanish officials experienced difficulties in the form of illegal commerce between traders from the Spanish and British territories. For the Spanish empire, French migration to St. Louis possessed a negative aspect. Many traders retained commercial ties with merchants still living on British land, and these relationships allowed trade to be carried on across the Mississippi boundary, an illegal practice which angered British officials and took some of the proceeds of the trade out of Spanish territory, where it could not profit the Empire.<sup>14</sup> The close proximity of St. Louis to Cahokia and Ste. Genevieve to Kaskaskia and the existence of ferries across the Mississippi dating from when both sections of the Illinois country had been French made carrying on this illegal commerce easy.<sup>15</sup> In 1768, partly in response to a British request, Ulloa issued a proclamation forbidding traders from Spanish territory from crossing the Mississippi and threatening those who did with expulsion.<sup>16</sup> The Spanish were troubled also by the encroachments of traders from east of the Mississippi into Spanish territory, in particular the area around the Missouri river. In 1769, Commandant Riu proclaimed that traders from British territory would not be tolerated on the Missouri and ordered that all merchants legally going to that river first be approved by himself.<sup>17</sup>

Over time, Spanish success in the Illinois country proved very limited. By 1778, the posts built on the Missouri river stood in disrepair and were occupied by only a handful of soldiers, and the commandant felt that a new fort had to be constructed. Similarly, the trade regulations did not eliminate the illegal commerce which drew wealth out of the Spanish empire. Traders from the British territory continued to operate in Spanish Illinois, while trade was carried on across the Mississippi's international boundary. The commandant in 1778 feared that illegal traders in the territory might damage the Spanish Indian alliances.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, there were signs that the fur and skin trade, itself, was slackening.<sup>19</sup> The Spanish, then, never fully achieved their goals for the Illinois country.

The history of the Spanish regime in Illinois appears similar to that of the British across the river, but, although the two groups experienced like disappointments, the Illinois country never gave the Spanish the degree of trouble it did the British. The Spanish, for example, never had to effect the kind of abrupt policy shifts carried out by the British in 1768 and 1774. One reason for this was that the Spanish, even with their commercial regulations, did not try to restrict the traders as severely as did the British. Officials like William Johnson felt that British traders and the French inhabitants in British territory could not be trusted to deal with the Indians without imperial supervision, so they tried to limit trade to the posts. The Spanish never erected such a rule, and, for the most part, they left their French subjects and the Spanish who came to the region free to



conduct their business as they saw fit. The Spanish policy demanded less government oversight and expense than the British plan and, as such, elicited fewer complaints and violations. More importantly, the Spanish officials never had to contend with the sort of political turmoil seen in the British Atlantic colonies, although there did occur a short-lived revolt of French inhabitants of Spanish Louisiana, and they never faced a movement aimed at establishing new interior settlements contrary to imperial policy. Not having to constantly fight its own people, Spain could concentrate on its original objectives of making and keeping Indian alliances and profiting through the trade. In this way, the history of the Spanish regime in the Illinois country sheds light upon some of the British failings and disadvantages.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Francis Bannon, "The Spaniards in the Mississippi Valley," in John McDermott, ed., *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley* (Urbana, 1974), 9-13.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Houck, ed., *The Spanish Regime in Missouri* (Chicago, 1909), 1:23-26, Don Ulloa's secret instructions for commandant Rui, January 7, 1767.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., 1:29-31, council of war at St. Louis, October 2, 1767; ibid., 1:49-51, report on the forts, March 10, 1769.

<sup>4</sup>IHC, 10:431, Aubry to "the Minister," February 4, 1765.

<sup>5</sup>Houck, 1:5-11, Don Ulloa's instructions, March 14, 1767.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., 1:46-48, commandant Riu on Indian affairs, March 9, 1769.

<sup>7</sup>IHC, 16:115, Marsh to Haldimand, November 20, 1767. This letter refers mainly to the British post at Natchez.

<sup>8</sup>Lawrence Kinnaird, ed., *Spain in the Mississippi Valley 1765-1794*, the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* for 1945, 1:147-148, O'Reilly to Arriaga, December 29, 1769.

<sup>9</sup>ibid., 1:205, Piernas to Unzaga, July 4, 1772; Houck, 1:147, report on Indian tribes from the British district who come to receive presents in Spanish Illinois, November 15, 1777.

<sup>10</sup>John Francis Bannon, "Spaniards and the Illinois Country," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 26 (May, 1976), 115; IHC 11:108, Stirling to Gage, October 18, 1765.

<sup>11</sup>IHC, 11:299-300, Gordon's journal, August 30, 1766.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., 16:243, Phyn to Johnson, April 15, 1768.

<sup>13</sup>Houck, 1:15-16, Don Ulloa's instructions, March 14, 1767.

<sup>14</sup>Carl J. Eckberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve* (Gerald, Mo., 1985), 55-56; for trading alcohol with merchants in British territory, Houck, 1:71-72, Piernas to O'Reilly, October 31, 1769; for trade between French on either side of the river, IHC, 11:301, Gordon's journal, August 30, 1766 and IHC, 11:390, Wilkins to Gage, September 13, 1768.

<sup>15</sup>N.M.M. Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana during the French Regime 1699-1763* (New York, 1916), 49. Ferries built during French regime.

<sup>16</sup>IHC, 16:267, Gage to Shelburne, April 24, 1768; IHC, 16:377, Gage to Hillsborough, August 17, 1768. The first letter concerns the British request for Spanish cooperation, the second Don Ulloa's proclamation.

<sup>17</sup>Houck, 1:35-36, Riu's trade regulations, 1769.

<sup>18</sup>Kinnaird, 1:310, Leyba to Galvez, November 16, 1778.

<sup>19</sup>ibid., 1:235. Cruzat to Unzaga, November 21, 1776. Cruzat complains that trade in Spanish Illinois is slow and that little merchandize is coming up from New Orleans.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Indians

As already suggested, the fate of the Europeans in the Illinois country--whether British, French or Spanish--depended in large measure upon the Indians. In a remote territory with long and tenuous supply and communications lines and one in which the European powers kept only nominal military forces, the safety of the white man's settlements could only be maintained through Indian friendship. Similarly, the primary commercial pursuit in the Illinois country, the skin and fur trade, could only be undertaken with the cooperation of the Indians who performed most of the hunting. The Indians also were indispensable to the whites in the rivalries and warfare between European powers. If war between Great Britain and Spain had come to the Illinois country, as was rumored in the late 1760s, it would have been fought by the Indian allies of each belligerent, as well as by the belligerents, themselves. For the Europeans, Indian alliances were the currency of power in the interior, and groups of whites attempted to use their Indian allies against their enemies, both other whites and hostile Indians. At the same time, the integral part played by Indian relations in all of the Europeans' pursuits in the region gave Indians a measure of influence over the whites, and groups of Indians worked to play groups of whites off one another and made demands upon Europeans as part of the terms of

white-Indian friendship. The British efforts to control the Illinois country, then, were always bound up in Indian relations.

Although Europeans sometimes spoke of the Indians as a homogeneous mass, there never existed a single Indian will or program in the Illinois country. Many different Indian groups resided in or passed through the region, and these separate groups functioned independently of one another. Alliances existed between groups, but these were never permanent and shifted frequently, while even within a given group considerable divergence could occur in the actions of its various elements. In their Indian relations, then, Europeans could never deal simply with a single Indian confederacy or even a small number of unified political entities. Rather, they acted within a matrix of changing alliances and rivalries between many small groups.

During the French regime, the immediate area around the Illinois settlements had been occupied by groups of what was called the Illinois nation, the largest of these groups being the Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Peoria, Tamaroa and Michigamea. Many of the Illinois withdrew with the French to the west side of the Mississippi after 1763, but in 1766 the Illinois in British territory still numbered about 1,500, with the largest concentration residing near the village of Kaskaskia.<sup>1</sup> These Indians seem to have come to accept British dominance of the country. In May of 1768, for instance, when the British at Fort de Chartres daily expected an attack by hostile Potawatomi Indians, Illinois groups joined the British in their

preparations. John Jennings, an agent of George Morgan's company, reported that the Mitchigamea had promised to fight with the British and, later, that the Kaskaskia had been sent out by Edward Cole against the British enemies.<sup>2</sup> The decade of the British regime, however, represented the latter stages of a long period of decline for the Illinois, and their significance as British allies dwindled with their population. Throughout the 18th century, they experienced frequent warfare with groups to the north, like the Potawatomi, and with the Chickasaw to the south. This warfare helped to reduce their population to the point where, in 1775, there remained only 700 Illinois east of the Mississippi.<sup>3</sup>

To the north of the Illinois groups, in the region of Lake Michigan and the upper Mississippi river, lived a number of peoples who exerted influence on the Illinois country. Of these groups, the Potawatomi appear most frequently in the records and correspondence of the British regime in Illinois. Beginning in the late 17th century, the Potawatomi gradually expanded south from their refuge on Lake Michigan's Door peninsula until they dominated the region of present-day northern Illinois. As a consequence of this expansion, they were the group most responsible for breaking the power of the Illinois Indians, driving them south to the villages on the Mississippi where the British eventually found them. The Potawatomi represented an important part of the confederation of Pontiac's uprising and remained hostile to the British after 1765 to the extent that General Gage described them as one of the two most troublesome

groups in the West, citing their frequent raids in the Illinois country and their refusal to allow British traders to move in Potawatomi territory.<sup>4</sup> In 1768, for example, the Potawatomi murdered two English traders who had gone to their territory in search of business, while in 1771 the Potawatomi attacked George Morgan's plantation near Fort de Chartres, killing two workers and taking a third prisoner.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Potawatomi traded extensively with merchants from St. Louis.<sup>6</sup> Other Indian groups to the north of the Illinois nation included the Kickapoo and Mascouten, whose 18th century expansion, like that of the Potawatomi, came at the expense of the Illinois, and the Fox and Sauk.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Morgan's records suggest that the British in Illinois were threatened at times by another northern group, the Chippewa. In 1767, Chippewa plundered two batteaux belonging to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan and killed fourteen of the company's employees. On the otherhand, Colonel Wilkins held at least one council with Chippewa at Fort de Chartres, which would imply a state of amity between some of these Indians and the British or at least an attempt to establish peaceful relations.<sup>8</sup>

The territory east of the British Illinois villages also provided several Indian groups important to the Illinois country. In the early 18th century, a number of Piankashaw (a group of the Miami nation), Mascouten and Kickapoo came together on the Wabash river at what became the French trading post of Vincennes, or St. Vincent.<sup>9</sup> This grouping, along with other Miami Indians such as the Wea, constituted what the British referred to as the "Wabash Indians." In the summer

of 1768, a group of these Indians attacked a Baynton, Wharton and Morgan hunting party, killing eight men. General Gage later reported that this attack had been justified, since the hunters had encroached upon Indian lands and had killed deer, bear and beaver. These animals, the pelts of which were the Indians' main trade items, were more jealously guarded than the buffalo, which were used primarily for food and had been the British hunters' stated quarry.<sup>10</sup> These Indians greatly worried the British, as they were supposedly under the sway of hostile and treacherous French traders at Vincennes. In 1772, General Gage ordered the French to evacuate Vincennes, but the traders claimed that they possessed valid land titles, and the Wabash Indians threatened to attack Gage's agents.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, a number of peoples from Spanish Illinois and from lands south of the British villages are worth mentioning. Morgan's accounts for Indian presents record visits to Fort de Chartres of Great and Little Osage, Missouri, and Illinois Indians who resided west of the Mississippi. These visits must have been welcome, in so far as the Indians brought news of Britain's French and Spanish rivals.<sup>12</sup> From the south, the Arkansas sometimes moved and hunted in the Illinois country, as did the Chickasaw. Elements of both of these groups at times were on good terms with the British. In 1771, for instance, General Gage suggested to Johnson that Chickasaw visiting Fort de Chartres be sent to attack the Potawatomi, while two years later the French traders at Vincennes complained of the British sending Chickasaw to plunder their goods.<sup>13</sup> From the southeast, the Shawnee



and Cherokee came to Illinois. The latter group was allied to the British and, like the Chickasaw, sometimes attacked French traders in the Illinois country.<sup>14</sup>

When the first British arrived in Illinois in late 1765, they entered a difficult situation with regards to the region's Indians. Many of the groups described above had been allied with the French during the Seven Years War, while some had warred upon the British in Pontiac's uprising. As late as April, 1765, groups of Illinois, Missouri and Osage had come to Fort de Chartres to inform the French commandant of their resolve to continue warring on the British, and emissaries from the Wabash region had proclaimed that they preferred death to submission. Furthermore, such declarations had been made in spite of the commandant's insistence that the war with Great Britain was over.<sup>15</sup> George Croghan's negotiations in 1765 and 1766 restored peace to the region, but it was a tenuous peace, at best. Captain Stirling reported that the Indians remained "insolent" towards the British, and William Johnson told the home government in 1767 that, while the Illinois country's Indians were now favorably disposed to the British, they "entertain a very slender opinion of our Faith and Sincerity."<sup>16</sup> Such statements, and the Indian attacks noted above, suggest that considerable effort was required to maintain amity with the Indians in Illinois.

A speech made by Levacher, a chief of one of the groups of the Illinois nation, to French and British at New Orleans in 1765 suggests the kind of conduct the Indians required of the British. Levacher had

come to New Orleans to confirm reports that his territory had been ceded by the French. "Since [the French emperor] rejects us," he declared, "we are masters of our bodies and our lands." To British officials, Levacher said:

You English only ask to kill; you have caused the red men to die; do not be surprised if I speak to you likewise; if I scold you, my heart is still sore because I have seen so many French and Indians die together. When the English conduct themselves well toward the red men, we shall look upon them with pleasure.<sup>17</sup>

The Indians, or at least those represented by Levacher, demanded that they be regarded as sovereign in their own country and that the British make amends for the late war by treating the Indians as friends and allies. Croghan stated that many Indians considered the British to be under obligation to them, since the British were new in the West, and Stirling reported that Indians claimed almost all of the Illinois country's land, the French having purchased virtually none of it.<sup>18</sup> In return for peace and amity, it seems, the Indians required that the British be generous in the trade and with presents and that they refrain from challenging the Indians' supremacy in the interior.

These were the same requirements which the French had confronted during the decades prior to their loss of the North American interior. French policy during the period of expansion was to build posts on unclaimed ground or with the permission of a given area's dominant group, and, in a sense, the French were never sovereign in the interior. In so far as they relied upon Indian cooperation to keep the posts secure and the lines of communication

open, they conceded to the Indians a measure of control in places like the Illinois country.<sup>19</sup> Historian Richard White asserts that the French and Indians in the late 17th and early 18th centuries developed a set of practices which allowed them to function together as allies and trading partners. French traders, for instance, married or became involved in other sexual relationships with Indian women, practices which created ties between Indian and white communities. Traders often lived for long periods of time in Indian villages. French officials and traders used gift-giving to help secure amicable relations with Indian groups. French authorities endeavored to mediate between warring Indians. These practices formed a "middle ground" upon which conflicts could be resolved and trade carried on, each side accommodating the other in certain ways. Such mutual accommodation, of course, was never universal. The French were never on friendly terms with all of the interior's Indian groups, and violence between whites and Indians was frequent, but this "middle ground" formed a basis for white-Indian interaction.<sup>20</sup>

Statements like Levacher's speech suggest that at least some groups of Indians after the Seven Years War sought to continue a situation in which the region's Europeans, which now meant the British officials and traders, would respect and accommodate their needs and desires. As already suggested, British control over events in the Illinois country depended upon the British securing the friendship of Indians with whom they could trade and who could be used against rival Europeans and other Indians. This dependence

gave Indian groups a measure of influence over the British, who labored under the necessity of maintaining their Indian alliances while avoiding the surrender of too much power to Indians.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Margaret K. Brown, *Cultural Transformations among the Illinois* (East Lansing, Michigan, 1979), 231.

<sup>2</sup>IHC, 16:275-278, Jennings' journal, May 5-10, 1768.

<sup>3</sup>R.E. Hauser, "The Illinois Indian Tribe," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 69 (May, 1976), 132-135; Bruce Trigger, ed., *The Northeast*, Volume 15 of *The Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington D.C., 1978), 674; Brown, 231.

<sup>4</sup>Trigger, ed., 726-727; JP, 8:252, Gage to Johnson, September 10, 1771.

<sup>5</sup>IHC, 16:287, Gage to Hillsborough, May 15, 1768; JP, 8:278, Gage to Johnson, September 24, 1771.

<sup>6</sup>Trigger, ed., 728.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., 668-670 for Mascouten; ibid., 662 for Kickapoo; Alvord, 36-37; BWM, Crown accounts, 1767-1768 and 1770; IHC, 16:225-226, Morgan to Baynton, April 5, 1768. Morgan reports rumors of an impending uprising on the part of the Sauk and Fox.

<sup>8</sup>IHC, 16:86, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan to Lauchlin Maclean, October 9, 1767; BWM, Crown account, March, 1768.

<sup>9</sup>Trigger, ed., 686.

<sup>10</sup>IHC, 16:367, Wilkins to Gage, August 15, 1768; IHC, 16:415, Gage to Hillsborough, October 9, 1768.

<sup>11</sup>JP, 8:285, Gage to Johnson, October 1, 1771; JP, 8:661, Gage to Johnson, December 15, 1771.

<sup>12</sup>BWM, Crown account, November and December, 1767.

<sup>13</sup>BWM, Crown account, October 1767 and October 1768, for Arkansas; Storm, 20-22; JP, 8:224-225, Gage to Johnson, August 14, 1771; JP, 8:779, Gage to Johnson, April 25, 1773.

<sup>14</sup>BWM, Crown account, November, 1769; JP, 8:661, Gage to Johnson, December 15, 1771 (same as note 8 above); IHC, 16:240-241, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, April 11, 1768; IHC, 16:362, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, July 20, 1768; BWM, Morgan to Alexander Williamson, December 25, 1769. The crown account notes a visit by a party of Shawnee to Fort de Chartres. Gage comments on the presence in Illinois of two Shawnee chiefs who are meeting with Illinois, Arkansas and Great Osage. Morgan's letters to his partners and his agent Williamson refer to attacks by Cherokee on Frenchmen and other Indians in the region of Vincennes; the French charged the British with inciting these attacks.

<sup>15</sup>IHC, 10:469, St. Ange to Dabaddie, April 7, 1765, for Illinois, Missouri, and Osage; IHC, 10:289-290, St. Ange to Dabaddie, July 15, 1764, for Wabash Indians.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., 11:107-108, Stirling to Gage, October 18, 1765; ibid., 16:46-47, Johnson's report on trade and Indian affairs, September 27, 1767.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., 10:450-451, speech of Illinois chief to Aubry, February 24, 1765. This event took place prior to the British occupation of Illinois.

<sup>18</sup>ibid., 11:53-54, Croghan to Johnson, November, 1765; ibid., 11:126, Stirling to Gage, December 16, 1765.

<sup>19</sup>W.J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and 18th Century Imperialism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (July, 1983), 348-349. Eccles here is not discussing the Illinois country, as such, but he writes of French imperial policy prior to the Seven Years War.

<sup>20</sup>White, 50-94, Chapter 2, "The Middle Ground."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Stalemate in the Trade

Imperial authorities could set policy and try to enforce it, but in the interior that policy's success or failure relied upon the actions of individuals. Illinois was a remote territory from the administrative centers in the Atlantic colonies and Canada, and the British government could afford to keep in Illinois only a small garrison with which to execute its rules. As time passed, the need for economy in its North American operations forced Great Britain to reduce even further its military presence. In this absence of strong government authority, the responsibility for making the territory live up to the home government's expectations rested with private Illinois inhabitants, both British nationals and the Frenchmen who, remaining east of the Mississippi, found themselves British subjects. Only these inhabitants, by following the dictates of British policy even without the coercion of British authority, could render that policy effective.

Traders in skins and furs comprised the segment of the white population upon which the realization of the home government's vision for the Illinois country most depended. Since pelts were an enumerated commodity, the trade could be expected to bring revenue to the home government, while the trade also would provide a market for British manufactured goods.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the trade was bound up with the security of the territory, since amicable commerce between British subjects and the region's Indians would help foster

the friendly relations needed to keep the territory peaceful. In short, the trade, if properly conducted, would serve to render the Illinois country valuable to the Empire and would help maintain British authority in the region through Indian alliances.

These two goals, revenue and security, inspired the trade regulations put in place after the conclusion of the war. Combining a mercantilist regard for protecting the Empire's colonial wealth with a reaction to the practical necessity of keeping the interior peaceful, these regulations were designed to impose upon traders a system which would ensure that their business practices neither deprived the Empire of revenue nor caused disruptions with the Indians. Under the imperial program, the trade in skins and furs was to have been an orderly affair carried out under the watchful eyes of British officials. Trade being restricted to the British posts, military officers and Indian agents could ensure that commerce operated in such a way that the proceeds of the trade remained in British hands and the Indians remained peaceful and satisfied.

In the reality of the Illinois country, however, the trade proved a far cry from the picture of order and profit found in the imperial program of management. Rather than a controlled operation in which British subjects traded British goods at British posts and villages, Illinois commerce turned out to be a confusing mass of varying practices. As already touched upon, traders carried on business with Indians outside of the posts, goods and money moved across the Mississippi river's international boundary, and traders from the



British territory employed business practices which deprived the Empire of revenue. British authorities, whether army officers or Indian department officials like Edward Cole, lacked the power to fully impose the imperial regulations by force, and the inhabitants of the territory were unwilling or unable to adhere to the rules of their own volition. The imperial program, designed to secure revenue for the Empire and limit the activities of traders so as to avoid disruptions with the Indians, fit neither the trade conditions of the Illinois country nor the desires and expectations of traders. The individual Illinois trader's need to secure profits proved to be inconsistent with the Empire's need to gain revenue and control interactions with Indians. The difficulties and confusion which resulted from this situation helped convince people like General Gage that the Illinois country was not worth the effort and expense it cost Great Britain to maintain its security and keep its commerce legitimate.

The traders of the Illinois country can be grouped into three general parties: the French merchants who had withdrawn to Spanish territory after the war but who continued to carry on business in British Illinois; the French who remained in the territory east of the Mississippi under British dominion; and the British, such as George Morgan, who came to the Illinois country following British occupation in 1765. Each of these parties had dealings with the others; sometimes they cooperated, sometimes they competed. Each employed trade practices which diverged from the British imperial

program. A look into the activities of these parties yields a picture of the Illinois trade situation's complexity.

While each of the general types of Indian trader possessed certain advantages and disadvantages in the trade, all three parties labored under several unfavorable conditions in the Illinois country. First, the remoteness of the region confronted traders with a long and difficult passage from wherever their goods might come, whether Philadelphia for the British traders or New Orleans for the Spanish and French. From Philadelphia, the shipment of goods involved hauling the merchandize over the mountains to Fort Pitt and then shipping it in batteaux down the Ohio river and up the Mississippi the short distance to the Illinois villages.<sup>2</sup> Optimally, the journey on the rivers would take about one month,<sup>3</sup> but the passage offered a number of possible difficulties. Indian groups like the Delaware and Shawnee, for instance, were in a position to easily obstruct the flow of men and goods down the Ohio river if they happened to be at enmity with Britain.<sup>4</sup> The Ohio river, itself, could cause problems in that it featured several points at which the water was sometimes too shallow to allow the passage of a loaded batteau. In these cases, the boats had to be unloaded and the goods carried along the shore until the river sufficiently deepened.<sup>5</sup> The passage up the Mississippi from the mouth of the Ohio had to be accomplished through rowing, and at times batteaux proved too heavy to be rowed upstream by their crews and had to be left at the rivers' confluence until more men could be sent down.<sup>6</sup> The expense of transporting goods from the eastern

colonies to Illinois represented the greatest difficulty. George Morgan, in setting up his company's venture in Illinois, had to create a transportation system from nothing, contracting with men to undertake every step from hauling the wood with which to build batteaux to guiding the finished craft to Illinois.<sup>7</sup> In autumn of 1766, Morgan expressed to company agent John Irwin his horror at the cost of this activity. "Indeed," Morgan wrote, "the Enormous Expenses attending it, at Times makes us almost Sick."<sup>8</sup>

The journey from New Orleans to the Illinois country involved difficulties rivaling those of the Ohio passage. During the French and Spanish regimes, an official convoy carrying merchants' goods and supplies for the military traveled north to Illinois each year. These convoys benefited from the presence of soldiers posted on the batteaux to guard the goods and help in the rowing. The journey commenced in late summer and lasted three or four months, owing to the necessity of rowing the entire way against the current. Setting out so late in the year, the convoy ran the risk of being ice-locked if the Mississippi experienced an early freeze, while it presented a target for attack by such hostile Indian groups as the Cherokee and Chickasaw. The return trip from the Illinois country, of course, was much more quick and easy. A convoy usually set out in February, when the river was high and swift, and the journey lasted about 20 days. Naturally, traders did not have to send their merchandize in these protective convoys, and the private transportation of goods went on at other times, although these journeys lacked the convoys' military guards.<sup>9</sup>

All three parties involved in the Illinois country's trade, then, were hindered in their operations by the danger and expense involved just in getting their merchandize to the territory.

A general decline in the productivity of the interior in skins and furs also hindered traders after 1763. British customs records indicate that the number of skins and furs imported into England decreased annually after the war, in spite of the British acquisition of vast new lands thought to have been rich with fur-bearing animals.<sup>10</sup> The illegal trade practices which resulted in skins and furs from British territory being sent to France and Spain must have contributed to this decline, but there are indications that the causes of the phenomenon went beyond the machinations of lawless traders. In the Illinois country, at least, business for the French and Spanish seemed to be hardly better than for the British. George Morgan spoke in 1768 of twenty bankruptcies among the traders west of the Mississippi and the general slowness of the commerce. On several occasions, Morgan also commented on the poor quality of the skins and furs coming from both sides of the river.<sup>11</sup> These reports suggest that the Illinois country was becoming less productive for all persons involved in the trade.

Despite the existence of these difficulties inherent in the Illinois country trade, British nationals in Illinois frequently reported that the schemes of traders from the Spanish territory formed the greatest barrier to British commercial success. As early as 1766, Lieutenant Alexander Fraser, who had visited the Illinois country as a British

emissary prior to the restoration of peace with the Indians, described the trade situation as close to hopeless. British traders, he asserted, could undersell the French in the interior by up to one-fourth, but the illegal French traders were so well acquainted with the Indians and treacherous towards the British that the British could probably never overcome their competition.<sup>12</sup> Only a year after their first goods arrived in Illinois, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan declared that the company had suffered great damage due to the French from west of the river trafficking in British territory, and several months later they admitted outright that they had failed to win the trade.<sup>13</sup> The same year, Morgan reported that French treachery among the Indians was such that "to ascend the Mississippi or Illinois Rivers would be certain Death."<sup>14</sup>

Surely, the obstacle presented by the traders from Spanish Illinois operating in British territory was a real one. These traders benefited from past experience in trading in the region and from already existing relationships with at least some of the Illinois country's Indians. The abundance of British complaints against these traders and the British willingness to blame their failures in the interior on their old French enemies, however, should not be allowed to overshadow other aspects of the trade situation. Commerce in the Illinois country was never just a matter of French experience and treachery defeating British efforts to engross the trade. The authorities in Spanish Illinois, for example, worried as much as the British about commercial rivalry. While the British viewed the

withdrawal of French traders to St. Louis as a tactic whereby these traders would escape British authority while retaining the commerce of the British territory, the Spanish saw the arrival of British traders in Illinois as a clear threat to Spanish interests. Governor Ulloa felt that British merchants had come to Illinois with "the purpose of establishing a profitable commerce with this province [that is, Spanish Illinois] and gradually absorbing the silver entering." British merchandize was cheaper than that of the Spanish or French traders, and Ulloa worried that whatever specie the government sent up from New Orleans would be used to purchase this merchandize and, as a result, end up in British hands. To prevent this, Ulloa prohibited the transfer of silver to British Illinois and ordered that soldiers and officials not be paid until such time as they were preparing to depart the territory.<sup>15</sup>

Governor Ulloa's worries were not unfounded. The presence of British merchants in the Illinois country drew traders from west of the Mississippi seeking the best possible terms for business. In 1767, for example, William Johnson reported that British traders in the interior helped the French and Spanish to engross the British territory's trade by selling them British merchandize, which was cheaper than goods sent up from New Orleans.<sup>16</sup> The records of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan show that the company's operatives attempted to take part in this illegal activity. In the summer of 1768, Morgan wrote to his partners, "I have every day for these ten Days past had different French Men with me from the other side of the

Mississippi for Goods." These men, however, could not pay Morgan until the following spring, and, therefore, he refused their offers. Furthermore, most of the French traders were indebted to New Orleans merchants whose agents in Spanish Illinois endeavored to keep the traders from selling their pelts to anyone but their creditors.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this situation, the company records suggest that Baynton, Wharton and Morgan carried out some illegal commerce with the traders of Spanish Illinois. John Richard Hanson, the company's operative in Cahokia, the main center in the British territory for the pelt trade, reported in 1770 that "Almost all of the Missouri traders are arrived from their Wintering with plenty of Peltries," and he hoped the company had sufficient goods to sell.<sup>18</sup> An earlier correspondence from company agent Windsor Brown to Morgan detailed Brown's attempts to secure the return of goods belonging to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan from an unnamed trader in the Spanish territory. Brown described his plans to cross the Mississippi to retrieve the merchandize and secure an account of what the trader had already sold. This merchandize consisted of Indian trade goods such as kettles and tomahawks, and much of it had been sent to St. Louis.<sup>19</sup> That the company had forwarded goods, apparently on credit, to a merchant in Spanish Illinois suggests that Morgan and his associates actively sought commerce with their rivals across the Mississippi.

Several of the Spanish territory's merchants appear in the Baynton, Wharton and Morgan business records. "Monsieur Pratte of Misire [Ste. Genevieve]" held an account with the store at Fort Chartres in 1769. Pratte was a merchant who had moved to the west side of the Mississippi from Kaskaskia as early as 1766, since he appears on the Ste. Genevieve militia role for that year.<sup>20</sup> A Monsieur "Cerry" sold over 800 livres (about £40) worth of skins and furs to the company in 1772, while a "Cerrie" appears soon after this first entry with more skins and furs. It seems likely that this "Cerry" or "Cerrie" was, in fact, the merchant Cerre, whom Louis Houck describes as having been the principle trader in Kaskaskia prior to British occupation, at which time he had moved to St. Louis.<sup>21</sup> In 1772, the company was trying to resolve its business in the Illinois country and Cerre's large deliveries of pelts may have represented the settlement of an outstanding account. A trader from St. Louis named Hubert also shows up in Morgan's papers as having had an account with the company, as does a Monsieur Carpentier, who might have been the merchant Carpentier whom Spanish officials listed as one of their territory's principle skin and fur traders and whom Houck describes as an early resident of Ste. Genevieve.<sup>22</sup> Finally, one of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's best early customers was a Monsieur Dubord, who in 1766 purchased over 1,000 livres (about £50) worth of merchandize, most of it cloth. The present author can find only one reference to a Dubord outside of the company's records, and this is to a Joseph Dubord who received a land grant in 1770 in the Spanish territory. Dubord, then, may have lived



west of the Mississippi during the time of his dealings with Baynton, Wharton and Morgan. If so, this business would have been illegal.<sup>23</sup>

The profits gained by British merchants in trading with inhabitants of the Spanish territory probably were never great enough to offset the general British failure to win the trade with the Indians. As already indicated, Morgan failed to do much business with the traders who came to him in search of goods, and examples of successful trade with the merchants of Spanish Illinois were not so frequent as to imply the existence of a stable or lucrative relationship. These examples, however, demonstrate that merchants on both sides of the Mississippi were willing to engage in activities which deprived their respective governments of revenue and took wealth out of their territories. While Morgan lobbied for the construction of new forts to halt the movement of illegal traders in and out of the Illinois country, he worked, in a sense, to help those illegal traders by selling them British merchandize. This is not to say that Morgan consciously set out to undercut his imperial government's authority and policies. Rather, Morgan's actions stand as a testament to the inappropriateness of those policies to conditions in the Illinois country. The French from west of the Mississippi still controlled part of the skin and fur trade in British Illinois, while Morgan and his agents possessed goods which these traders desired. In this situation, Morgan and his agents took what they probably saw as a logical step and attempted to trade with the French who came illegally to the company's stores. This illegal trade, then, demonstrates three aspects of commerce in the Illinois

country. First, the fact that Morgan tried to sell trade goods to merchants who were ostensibly his company's rivals suggests that he and his agents had been unable in their own right to secure a satisfactory amount of trade with the Indians. Second, it shows that the French from Spanish Illinois continued to trade successfully in British territory. Finally, the illegal trade demonstrates that a rivalry between the British and the traders of Spanish Illinois did not always exist. Certainly, these two parties competed, but they did so as individual merchants, rather than as members of national groups, and when conditions suggested it they set aside their rivalry and the mercantilist policies of their respective imperial authorities in favor of mutual profit.

This commerce between British traders like Morgan and the French of the Spanish territory could not erase the anxiety felt by British nationals over the presence of their erstwhile enemies in Illinois. Many British believed that the French on both sides of the Mississippi conspired against them. A 1768 report drawn up most likely by Captain Forbes, then commander at Fort de Chartres, on "Commerce in the Illinois Country" asserted that the French on either side of the river worked together, those from the east sending skins and furs across the river in return for French merchandize sent up from New Orleans. It also stated that the French traders, though British subjects, would not send their pelts to a British port unless they were offered a bond.<sup>24</sup> Late in the same year, Colonel Wilkins reported that inhabitants landed merchandize openly on the east bank of the

river.<sup>25</sup> For Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, the French inhabitants presented an added threat in the form of competition to their campaign to win a contract for supplying the Illinois military. At the time of the company's initial operations in Illinois, Colonel Reed, then commander at Fort de Chartres, had an agreement with French resident Daniel Blouin for provisions. Morgan reported that French hunters moved throughout the territory and suggested that Reed was too much under the influence of the French inhabitants.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the French in British territory, like those who infiltrated from Spanish Illinois, tended to be on good terms with the area's Indians and, as such, could safely conduct their business at the Indian villages, while imperial regulations and Indian hostility kept the British bottled up at the established posts.<sup>27</sup>

While the French on either side of the Mississippi could cooperate with each other in the trade, Frenchmen from the British territory sometimes represented a threat to their co-nationals across the river and to Spanish authorities. Just as French traders from west of the Mississippi conducted business in British Illinois, French traders from east of the river operated in Spanish territory in ways which presented the legal traders of the region with competition. In 1773, a small diplomatic crisis flared up when the Spanish authorities learned that a merchant from Cahokia, Jean Marie Ducharme, had slipped up the Missouri river and begun to trade with the Missouri and Little Osage Indians. The Spanish commandant, Pedro Piernas, had recently prohibited commercial relations with these two groups as punishment

for their hostility towards the white population, and he viewed Ducharme's expedition as a willful attempt to deepen the estrangement between the Indians and the Spanish. In an angry letter to the British commander, Hugh Lord, Piernas wrote, "those violators of the most reserved rights. . . have spread defamatory speeches against us, and consequently they have added renewed strength to the hatred by the Indians." Piernas further charged that Ducharme and his associates had sold their goods at artificially low prices to their own loss, so as to convince the Indians that the traders of the Spanish territory, with their higher prices, had been cheating them. Piernas also referred to other incidents in which traders from British Illinois had invaded Spanish lands. A posse, organized by Piernas and led by the trader Pierre Laclede, eventually captured Ducharme near the Missouri river and, after confiscating his goods, sent him back to British territory. The Ducharme affair, then, suggests that the French traders were not always united across the Mississippi river. Rather, operations like that of Ducharme could pose a threat to the French traders of Spanish Illinois, as well as to the Spanish authorities, by disrupting trade relations with groups of Indians. The correspondence between Piernas and Lord concerning the Ducharme affair presents a picture of the difficulties authorities on both sides of the Mississippi experienced in trying to restrict movement across what was a rather unimposing international boundary.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the continuing dominance of the trade by French merchants, the French residing in British territory represented more

to the British traders than competition. While Colonel Wilkins could complain of French goods from New Orleans being transported into British territory, the records of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan suggest that the French inhabitants of British Illinois also purchased considerable amounts of British merchandize. Like the traders of Spanish Illinois who came illegally to the Baynton, Wharton and Morgan stores in search of better goods and prices, the French in British territory were not above buying from their former enemies. Indeed, such trade was even easier for them than for the French across the river, since it was legal. In the spring of 1767, the Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's agents received instructions stating, "We entirely approve of your interesting . . . creditable French Traders & beg you will prudently continue to dispose of all the goods you possibly can in the same way."<sup>29</sup> A year later, Morgan reported that "general Bankruptcies among the French Traders" were cutting into his business.<sup>30</sup> Also in 1768, Morgan wrote to Baynton that his hopes for procuring skins and furs had been raised by his learning that the autumn convoy from New Orleans had consisted of fewer dry goods than in previous years, and he declared that "We are just entering into the proper Channel" for the pelt trade.<sup>31</sup> These letters suggest that the company purchased a considerable number of its skins and furs from French inhabitants, who continued to control the trade with the Indians, rather than from the Indians, themselves. A smaller New Orleans convoy meant that Baynton, Wharton and Morgan held a greater share of the trade goods in the territory and, as such, could

expect more French traders to come to them with their pelts. On the other hand, failure on the part of the French to buy skins and furs from the Indians meant fewer pelts, in turn, for Morgan's company to purchase from the French.

The business journals and correspondence from the company's various stores also support the idea that at least some of the French traders in British Illinois sold their skins and furs to British traders. In the autumn of 1769, Windsor Brown worked to induce the company's debtors to bring in skins and furs with which to settle their accounts. The two debtors Brown mentioned by name in a letter to Morgan were both French.<sup>32</sup> The company's business journals refer to money owed to a Monsieur "Bauvies" (probably Beauvais, a prominent family in Kaskaskia) and to Monsieur Traversie for pelts, and they make note of orders made by John Richard Hanson in favor of Frenchmen trading skins and furs.<sup>33</sup> The journals also note transactions with Frenchmen involving goods which were obviously destined for trade with the Indians, such as when Pierre Ladrout bought wampum in the autumn of 1766. Although the journals do not actually mention pelts in these last instances, the fact that the Frenchmen in question were buying Indian trade goods suggests that Baynton, Wharton and Morgan eventually would be paid in pelts.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the commerce in pelts, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan maintained a steady business with the French of British Illinois who were not skin and fur traders. Documents like the 1768 report on the "Commerce of the Illinois Country" assert that the French

inhabitants preferred to trade with their co-nationals whose goods came from New Orleans,<sup>35</sup> but the business journals of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan suggest that the French traded with the British company from the outset of its Illinois venture. Almost every page of these journals notes transactions with Frenchmen, and the names of prominent Illinois families, such as Lagrange, Charleville, and Beauvais, appear. Even Daniel Blouin, with whom the company competed for the right to sell provisions to the military, occasionally bought goods from Morgan's stores. Rum and textiles, along with rifles, shot and powder, were the most popular items.<sup>36</sup> In early 1769, Morgan asked Baynton to send 400 rifles and a great lot of cotton cloth, out of which the inhabitants liked to make their trousers, and he reported that flowered cloth sent earlier had been well-received by the French women. Morgan employed hunters who killed deer and buffalo in the Illinois area and to the south, and he sold some of this meat to the French inhabitants. In 1768, he reported that this activity was bringing good returns.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the company dealt lucratively in black slaves. Morgan's first year in Illinois led him to believe that the inhabitants would pay dearly for slaves, and he felt that he would be able to demand payment for them half in pelts and half in badly needed cash. When Morgan returned to the Illinois country in late 1767 after a visit to Philadelphia, he brought with him several hundred French-speaking slaves from Jamaica. He was able to sell all of these people within a year's time at about \$400 Philadelphia currency (about £240) each.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that the French in British Illinois traded with Baynton, Wharton and Morgan from the beginning of the company's operations should not be allowed to obscure the difficulties involved in that commerce. The scarcity of specie in the region represented the most daunting of these difficulties. The French inhabitants preferred to pay their debts in farm produce, since the Illinois country was chronically short of cash. If traded to French merchants, this produce could be sent down river for sale in New Orleans. Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, however, had to ship what they could not use or sell again in Illinois to Philadelphia, an expensive endeavor. The company used the produce it received for provisioning the military and in a short-lived distilling venture, but these two operations required only a limited amount of grain and livestock, particularly with the company's continuing failure to secure a provisions contract. In 1770, Morgan reported a great want of European goods in Illinois but added that the inhabitants had no way of paying for them which could be of use to the company. The company, for its part, preferred to pay its debts in bills of exchange, but the French could only sell these bills at a discount, so this mode of payment was frowned upon. During the French regime, inhabitants had used a kind of note called a *bon*, but Colonel Wilkins banned their use soon after his arrival. Late in 1767, Morgan wrote to his partners that he needed eight to ten-thousand dollars cash in Illinois but that he would be grateful if one-thousand could be sent.<sup>40</sup>



Taking into account the problems caused by the paucity of specie in the region, it still seems that Baynton, Wharton and Morgan were successful in drawing the French inhabitants of British Illinois to trade with them. At least some of the French skin and fur merchants dealt with the company, and many French inhabitants who were not traders bought goods for their personal use at the company's stores. Meanwhile, the British traders, themselves, did not merely wait at the posts for Indians and French inhabitants to be drawn thither by British merchandize. While the home government envisioned a well-ordered commerce which would take place at the posts and benefit the Empire, traders like George Morgan reacted to conditions in the Illinois country by employing practices which ranged from the merely irregular to the clearly illegal.

As already mentioned, the Baynton, Wharton and Morgan stores attracted French traders whose skins and furs had been procured in ways which contravened the imperial British trade regulations. In addition to accepting the business of these illegal traders, the company attempted to employ Frenchmen directly as factors. This idea made sense in so far as the French tended to enjoy better relations with the Indians than did the British. The instructions of the first group of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan agents to go to Illinois advised them, if possible, to immediately employ a number of French traders. "This we look upon as an object of real Consequence," the instructions read, "as they have their Connections and great Influence with the Natives of that Neighborhood, etc."<sup>41</sup> Employing French agents in this manner

was perfectly legal. The French who had remained east of the Mississippi after British occupation were British subjects and, as such, allowed to trade in British territory. The Frenchmen in Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's employ, however, sometimes worked for the company in ways which violated imperial trade regulations. In early 1767, Morgan wrote from Philadelphia to inform operatives in Illinois that a Monsieur Maisonville would soon be at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers with a load of skins and furs. The recipients of the letter were to direct Maisonville to send the pelts down to New Orleans, and they were to supply Maisonville with any trade goods he requested.<sup>42</sup> That Maisonville was at the Mississippi and Ohio junction suggests that he had been trading outside of the posts, an activity contrary to imperial regulations, since in 1767 the trade was still under imperial control. Furthermore, Maisonville's relationship with the company seems to have been that of a full-fledged agent, rather than an independent trader who simply bought goods from the company's stores. In short, the company employed a French agent who carried on illegal trade on its behalf. During the early years of the Illinois venture, Morgan also attempted to hire Indians to hunt for furs and skins exclusively for him.<sup>43</sup>

Another of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan's irregular trade activities involved trying to sell provisions to the Spanish military across the river. In the summer of 1767, Morgan wrote, "As the Spaniards have certainly got up to the Illinois by this Time, Provisions of every kind must be in great Demand & Flour in particular must rise

in Price."<sup>44</sup> The next year, Morgan reported that the Spanish needed meat and that he was expecting the commander, Colonel Forbes, to approve his exporting buffalo killed by company hunters. At this time, Colonel Forbes was still receiving provisions from Daniel Blouin, so the plan to sell food to the Spanish might have been designed to offset the losses which resulted from the company's continuing failure to win a contract with the British military.<sup>45</sup>

The difficulty involved in shipping goods from the Illinois country to the Atlantic coast colonies created the impetus for a third irregular commercial activity, the trading of goods with French and Spanish merchants in New Orleans. British merchandize reached the Illinois country by way of the Ohio river, but returning boats up the Ohio, against its current, was slow, difficult and expensive. As such, British traders preferred to send their pelts and other goods on the easier passage down the Mississippi to New Orleans, where ships could then carry them to a British port. New Orleans' international market, however, tempted British merchants to sell their goods to the French and Spanish. In early 1767, General Gage lamented that, while the British possessions yielded £80,000 sterling in skins and furs per annum, very little of it passed through British ports, where the government could exact duties upon it.<sup>46</sup> George Morgan's correspondence with Bart MacNamara, his comapny's contact in New Orleans, suggests that Morgan sometimes joined in the practice of selling skins and furs to the merchants of that city. In the summer of 1766, MacNamara informed Baynton, Wharton and Morgan that the

French in New Orleans were offering better prices than those available at British ports.<sup>47</sup> A letter from one year later details MacNamara's attempts to sell pelts newly arrived from the Illinois country to French and Spanish buyers. There was a general dearth of cash among the New Orleans merchants at that time, and MacNamara ended up sending the company's pelts on to New York, but the letter suggests that MacNamara's first intention was to sell the pelts to the French or Spanish and that this was a regular practice.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to selling their skins and furs in New Orleans, British traders sometimes purchased goods at that city for use in Illinois. In late 1767, Morgan asked MacNamara to send him six hogsheads of French red wine and a gross of Indian scalping knives.<sup>49</sup> In the summer of 1772, conflict arose when the authorities of Spanish Illinois discovered that Pablo Segond, a prominent trader of that territory, had brought goods belonging to the British traders James Rumsey and William Murray up from New Orleans. Although Murray claimed that Louisiana's Governor Unzaga had approved the shipment, commandant Piernas impounded the goods at Ste. Genevieve.<sup>50</sup> A similar incident occurred a short time later when Pablo Perigar steered his boat into British territory on his way up the Mississippi from New Orleans and unloaded merchandize belonging to a British trader in Kaskaskia.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, British traders occasionally went so far as to violate the international boundary and conduct business within Spanish Illinois. In the autumn of 1769, Windsor Brown, Morgan's agent in Cahokia, informed James Rumsey that he planned to slip into Spanish territory

on the Missouri river during the night. Although Brown did not state his exact purpose in doing this, it would be fair to surmise that he was hoping to trade.<sup>52</sup> In his correspondence with Captain Lord over the Ducharme affair, Spanish commandant Piernas made reference to John Richard Hanson, who had taken up residence in Spanish Illinois, so that, according to Piernas, "he could misbehave with greater impunity on the Mississippi River." Hanson was a British trader who earlier had been a factor for Baynton, Wharton and Morgan. Considering that Piernas was comparing Hanson's actions to those of Ducharme, Hanson's "misbehavior" must have involved illegal trade in Spanish territory.<sup>53</sup> Other traders from British Illinois carried on business west of the Mississippi. In 1767, merchants in Detroit complained that Edward Cole's allowing traders to go to the Indian villages had led to traders from British Illinois moving on the Missouri river.<sup>54</sup> In documents like the letter containing the Detroit merchants' complaint, however, it is difficult to ascertain whether the traders referred to were British nationals or French inhabitants or a mixture of both. In the two instances noted above, the illegal traders were undoubtedly British. It seems unlikely that these would have been the only occasions upon which British traders moved illegally in Spanish Illinois.

Two general goals lay at the heart of the British imperial program for the regulation of trade in the interior: the securing of economic benefits for the Empire and the maintenance of peaceful relations with

the Indians. For the first of these goals to be realized, British subjects needed to control the region's trade and British authorities had to ensure that the proceeds of the trade--most importantly, skins and furs--remained in British hands, where they could be taxed or where at least they could be expected to benefit the British economy, in general. In so far as this first goal involved an attempt to ensure that the benefits of the trade flowed only to Great Britain, it can be described as mercantilist. For the second goal to be accomplished, authorities like William Johnson felt that imperial officials needed to be able to oversee commercial relations between British subjects and the Indians, since traders left alone could not be trusted to treat the Indians fairly and avoid causing outbreaks of Indian violence. These goals inspired the regulations set up in 1764 and the actions of military commanders in the Illinois country even after control over the trade was turned over to the colonies in 1768, since the colonial administrations never formulated regulations to replace those of the imperial program.

These goals, however, and the means of securing them put forward by the home government and people like Johnson proved ill-fitted to conditions in the Illinois country. British nationals like George Morgan never dominated the region's skin and fur trade, while the Illinois country's other British subjects, the French traders who had remained east of the Mississippi after the war, tended not to send their pelts to British ports. Furthermore, British traders sometimes sold what pelts they did secure at New Orleans to Spanish and French merchants, who

frequently offered better prices than those found in British ports and who relieved British traders of the necessity of transporting their pelts any further. Meanwhile, traders from Spanish Illinois operated in the British territory, further limiting the possibilities of the British empire profiting from the Illinois pelt trade. Finally, Johnson's policy of restricting trade to the posts, where British officials could guarantee the traders' good behavior towards the Indians, quickly broke down in Illinois, since, as Edward Cole suggested to Johnson after Cole authorized Illinois traders to operate outside of the posts, restricting transactions in this way only ensured that the territory's skins and furs would go to illegitimate traders.

When Baynton, Wharton and Morgan failed to engross the Illinois country's trade to the extent they had expected, the company's agents were forced to alter somewhat their business activities. George Morgan's attempts to carry on substantial business with French skin and fur merchants suggest that he envisioned a relationship whereby the ill effects of the continuing French dominance of the trade would be negated by his company's becoming the French merchants' source of trade goods. Such a relationship, if maintained over time, would eliminate the necessity of winning the Indian trade outright. Like the New York merchants who, prior to the Seven Years war, illegally obtained furs from Canada,<sup>55</sup> Morgan would receive the Illinois country's pelts through the French in return for British merchandize. Rather than compete with the French traders, Morgan hoped to secure their cooperation with the promise of mutual profit. As already

described, this operation was hindered by the French traders' indebtedness to merchants in New Orleans, which necessitated their sending their pelts to that city, although the French still carried on some trade with Morgan's company. Since a number of these traders resided in Spanish Illinois, Morgan's activities were hindered also by the efforts of the Spanish and British military to prevent trade across the Mississippi. In 1770, Morgan wrote, "Matters here are carried to ridiculous Length on both Sides just as if the affairs of the two Nations depended upon these dispicable settlements." 56

Morgan's efforts to establish business relations with French pelt traders on either side of the Mississippi, then, represented an attempt to profit from the Illinois venture, while avoiding the competition of French merchants. The company's efforts to acquire land in the Illinois country also can be seen in this light. Morgan's land purchases and the grant he received from Colonel Wilkins directly contravened imperial policy, but these actions were taken in anticipation of Samuel Wharton's proposal for an Illinois colony being approved by the home government. If such a colony had been established, Morgan's land undoubtedly would have been valuable, and the arrival of colonists would have provided buyers for the company's goods. Land speculation represented a way in which Morgan's company could find profit in the Illinois country without the Indian trade. Morgan's rival, William Murray, also recognized the value of land speculation over the skin and fur trade. In the spring of 1769, Murray expressly requested his business partners in Philadelphia not to send him Indian goods,



and, by 1773, Murray's firm, Franks and Company, had completely given up the Indian trade<sup>1</sup> to concentrate on its land acquisition schemes.<sup>57</sup>

Commerce in the Illinois country during the British regime never fit the orderly model set down in the imperial trade regulations. Continued French dominance of the skin and fur trade ensured that most of the region's wealth from pelts would never benefit the British empire, while it forced British traders like George Morgan to abandon any thoughts of economic nationalism they might have entertained and to engage in activities which took pelts and trade merchandize out of the Empire. The British failed twice with regards to trade in the Illinois country. Individual traders like Morgan failed to prize the commerce away from the French, while the home government and imperial officials failed to erect policies which could meet the complex trade conditions in the territory. The result was a kind of stalemate in which the British traders and officials, although technically the Illinois country belonged to them after 1765, could not exercise control over their possession.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Carter, 94.

<sup>2</sup>Savelle, 24-26.

<sup>3</sup>IHC, 11:384-385, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan to John Irwin, September 21, 1766. For expected duration of journey.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., 16:318, Gage to Hillsborough, June 16, 1768.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., 11:358, Matthew Clarkson's journal, September 3, 1766; BWM, Morgan to Clarkson, July 23, 1766.

<sup>6</sup>IHC, 11:173-176, Jennings' journal, March-April, 1766; BWM, Morgan to Alexander Williams, January 20, 1769.

<sup>7</sup>BWM, George Morgan's undated affidavit, on page 14 Morgan describes how there was no transport scheme when he arrived at Fort Pitt in 1765; IHC, 11:347-348, Morgan John Irwin on hauling wood to Fort Pitt, August 2, 1766; IHC, 11:368-369, hauling contract for merchandize, September 2, 1766; IHC, 11:328-329, boat-building contract, June 30, 1768; IHC, 11:386, Morgan to Irwin on hiring batteau-men, September 21, 1766.

<sup>8</sup>IHC, 11:386, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan to Irwin, September 21, 1766.

<sup>9</sup>Norman Ward Caldwell, *The French in the Mississippi Valley 1740-1750* (Urbana, 1941), 27-28; Natalia Belting, *Kaskaskia under the French Regime* (Urbana, 1940), 84-86; Surrey, 295. These accounts are of the French period, but references in the Morgan papers to the arrival of goods in Spanish Illinois in autumn and at other times suggest to me that the French convoy system was continued after Spanish take-over--BWM, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, December 24, 1767; BWM, Morgan to Baynton, October 30, 1768.

<sup>10</sup>Carter, 93-94.

<sup>11</sup>IHC, 16:226-227, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, April 5, 1768; IHC, 16:324-325, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, June 20, 1768; IHC, 16:349, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, July 11, 1768; IHC, 16:434-435, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, October 30, 1768.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., 11:229, Fraser to [Haldimand], May 4, 1766. Fraser here is speaking of the interior in general, but his assertions seem applicable to the Illinois country.

<sup>13</sup>BWM, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan to ?, April 5, 1767; IHC, 16:84-85, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan to Lauchlin Maclean, October 9, 1767.

<sup>14</sup>IHC, 16:131, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, December 10, 1767.

<sup>15</sup>Kinnaird, 1:57-58, Ulloa to Grimaldi, August 4, 1768.

<sup>16</sup>IHC, 16:44, Johnson's report to the Lords of Trade, September 22, 1767.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., 16:362-363, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, July 20, 1768; ibid., 16:434-435, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, October 30, 1768.

<sup>18</sup>BWM, Hanson to Morgan, April 27, 1770; BWM, Morgan to Joseph Morgan, June 8, 1770. Morgan here refers to Cahokia as the center of the pelt trade in British Illinois.

<sup>19</sup>ibid., Windsor Brown to Morgan, September 23, 1769. Brown at this time was working to call in debts owed the company. A general reduction in business would explain why he was working to retrieve the goods from this trader.

<sup>20</sup>ibid., Fort de Chartres journal, 1769; Louis Houck, *History of Missouri* (Chicago, 1908), 1:352-353; Eckberg, 43, for names on the 1766 Ste. Genevieve militia role.

<sup>21</sup>BWM, Kaskaskia journal, 1772; Houck, *History*, 1:356; Savelle, 33, for conversion of livres to sterling.

<sup>22</sup>BWM, Hubert to Morgan, March 17, 1769; BWM, Kaskaskia journal, 1771, for Carpentier; Houck, *Spanish Regime*, 1:55-56, table of fur shipments to New Orleans for 1772 and note 2.

<sup>23</sup>BWM, Kaskaskia journal, 1766; Houck, *History*, 1:20-21; Savelle, 33, for currency conversion.

<sup>24</sup>IHC, 16:382, commerce report, 1768.

<sup>25</sup>ibid., 16:390, Wilkins to Gage, September 13, 1768.

<sup>26</sup>ibid., 16:440, Morgan's journal, November 26, 1766; ibid., 16:132, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, December 10, 1767; Savelle, 48-50.

<sup>27</sup>same as note 24 above.

<sup>28</sup>Kinnaird, 1:214-218, Piernas to Unzaga, April 12, 1773; Abraham Nasitir, ed., "Ducharme's Invasion of Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 24 (1929-1930), 16, Piernas to Lord, February 21, 1773 and 19, Lord to Piernas, March 20, 1773.

<sup>29</sup>BWM, unsigned letter to Illinois, March 19, 1767. This seems to be from either Baynton or Morgan, who had returned to Philadelphia for a brief stay at around this time (Savelle, 40).

<sup>30</sup>IHC, 16:349, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, July 11, 1768.

<sup>31</sup>BWM, Morgan to Baynton, October 30, 1768.

<sup>32</sup>ibid., Windsor Brown to Morgan, September 23, 1769. I did not come across the names (Rappecault and LaPlanke) in the accounts of Spanish Illinois I read and so surmise that they were residents of the British territory.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., Kaskaskia journal, 1771; ibid., Fort de Chartres journal, 1768-1771.

<sup>34</sup>ibid, Kaskaskia journal, 1766.

<sup>35</sup>same as note 24 above.

<sup>36</sup>BWM, Kaskaskia journals, 1766-67 and 1770-72 and Fort de Chartres journal, 1768-1771. Blouin appears in the Kaskaskia journal for 1766-1767. Lagrange, Charleville, and Beauvais appear on a memorial to General Gage in 1765, and, as such, I have considered them to have been prominent Kaskaskians, IHC, 11:112, memorial to Gage, autumn, 1765.

<sup>37</sup>BWM, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, February 10, 1769.

<sup>38</sup>IHC, 16:223, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, April 5, 1768.

<sup>39</sup>BWM, Morgan from Philadelphia, April 5, 1767; IHC, 16:135, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, December 11, 1767; Alvord, 277; Savelle, 33, for currency conversion.

<sup>40</sup>Savelle, 46-47; IHC, 16:488, Gage to Hillsborough, February 3, 1769, for *bons*; IHC, 16:152, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, December 22, 1767; BWM, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, November 29, 1770.

<sup>41</sup>BWM, Baynton, Wharton and Morgan to Jennings and Winston, January 1, 1765.

<sup>42</sup>ibid., unsigned to Illinois, March 19, 1767. Morgan was in Philadelphia at this time. Logically, he would be the partner directing affairs in Illinois.

<sup>43</sup>Savelle, 44.

<sup>44</sup>BWM, Morgan to ?, August 17, 1767.

<sup>45</sup>IHC, 16:223, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, April 5, 1768.

<sup>46</sup>ibid., 11:497, Gage to Shelburne, January 17, 1767. Gage does not mention from where he gets the figure 80,000.

<sup>47</sup>BWM, MacNamara to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, August 8, 1766.

<sup>48</sup>ibid., MacNamara to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, July 28, 1767; ibid., MacNamara to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, September 6, 1767, for pelts being sent to New York.

<sup>49</sup>IHC, 16:150, Morgan to MacNamara, December 20, 1767.

<sup>50</sup>Kinnaird, 1:199-201, testimony of Segond to Piernas, June 1, 1772. James Rumsey had been a business partner of Morgan's until he formed a partnership with Murray. He had also served as a secretary to Colonel Wilkins. Pablo Segond appears on the Louisiana government's 1772 list of traders as one of the more important merchants in Spanish Illinois. Houck, *Spanish Regime*, 1:55.

<sup>51</sup>Kinnaird, 1:208, Piernas to Unzaga, August 1, 1772. Piernas reported that the merchandize belonged to an "Englishman named Morgan who came up in [Perigar's] boat." George Morgan, however, left the Illinois country in 1771 (Savelle, 71), and at any rate it seems unlikely that a man trying to finish up his business venture in Illinois would bring in new merchandize. Piernas, it seems, was mistaken as to who owned the goods, or else there was another Morgan.

<sup>52</sup>BWM, Brown to James Rumsey, September 18, 1769.

<sup>53</sup>Nassitir, 18, Piernas to Lord, February 21, 1773.

<sup>54</sup>IHC, 16:83, McCleod to Johnson, October 8, 1767.

<sup>55</sup>Eccles, 351.

<sup>56</sup>BWM, Morgan to Fitzpatrick, July 17, 1770.

<sup>57</sup>William V. Byars, ed., *Bernard and Michael Gratz, Merchants of Philadelphia* (Jefferson City, Mo., 1916), 43, Murray to Gratz brothers, April 24, 1769; Anna Edith Marks, "William Murray, Trader and Land Speculator in the Illinois Country," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society* 26 (1919), 197-198.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Stalemate in White-Indian Relations

The designs of British officials and British traders for the Illinois country demanded that stable and amicable relations be maintained with at least some of the territory's Indian groups. The British authorities in the region needed to retain enough Indian allies to ensure that the area immediately around the Illinois settlements would remain peaceful, and they needed to be able to send these allies against Indian groups that were hostile to the British, such as the Potawatomi. Furthermore, the British military in Illinois would need the alliance of as many Indian groups as it could muster if the much-rumored war between Great Britain and Spain broke out. Traders, for their part, relied upon Indians as the source of the region's wealth in pelts. As the British traders who tried to carry on business with the Potawatomi discovered, enmity between a given Indian group and the British rendered commerce impossible and made the interior a very dangerous place for traders.

Indian relations formed perhaps the greatest source of British aggravation in the Illinois country. The British authorities and traders were never able to secure the amity of all of the region's Indian groups, and outbreaks of Indian violence against the British occurred regularly. The papers of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan contain many references to Indian depredations at the company's stores or against



its batteaux and to the murder by Indians of company agents and British soldiers. For traders, Indian relations provided additional aggravation in so far as the measures taken by officials like William Johnson to help ensure peace with the Indians seemed to violate economic logic. The rule limiting trade to the posts handicapped the traders who observed it, while the restrictions placed on interior settlement blocked the efforts of speculators like Samuel Wharton to secure land grants and found a new colony in Illinois. Meanwhile, the Indian alliances that the British did maintain proved so expensive that imperial officials began to question whether the Illinois country was worth to Great Britain the cost of its continued possession. Indian groups demanded gifts and aid from their British allies, while the presence of the Spanish just across the Mississippi river and of suspect Frenchmen throughout the interior reminded the British continually of their very great need to do whatever was necessary to maintain their Indian alliances. Officials like Colonel Wilkins worked to reduce the expense of Indian presents and to alter the nature of British-Indian relationships to the former's favor, but the British were never able to control Indian relations to their own satisfaction, and throughout the British decade the question of who really dictated the terms and tenor of British-Indian relations remained open.

The difficulties just described seem to indicate that the British failed in their Illinois country Indian relations, but, in one sense, these relations can be described as having been successful. While outbreaks of Indian violence occurred and the expense of Indian affairs troubled

British officials, the British never found themselves engaged in a full Indian war. Violence was regular, but it was never organized or concentrated, and an attempt on the part of a group or groups of Indians to drive the British out of the region did not occur. Rumors sometimes circulated concerning the construction of a broad Indian coalition against the British, but such a coalition never materialized. The British efforts to maintain beneficial Indian relations, then, did not fail so much as they stalled. The British in Illinois secured enough Indian allies to allow them to send Indians against their enemies and to keep another confederacy like that of Pontiac's uprising from forming, but they never controlled all of the territory's Indian groups, nor could they escape the necessity of meeting some of the demands of their Indian allies.

In much of the British correspondence concerning Indian affairs in the Illinois country, one discovers a willingness on the part of the writers to see French machinations at the root of British troubles. In 1766, Edward Cole suggested to William Johnson that French traders had lowered the prices they offered to the Indians to the point where surely they were making virtually no profits at all or even losing money. Cole saw in this situation a plot to form a large Indian alliance with which to drive the British from Illinois.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, General Gage interpreted the difficulties experienced by the British in relations with the Wabash river Indians as the work of renegade French traders who, with the design of monopolizing the area's commerce, kept these Indians hostile to the British.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the intrigues of the French

traders against the British form a part of the explanation for British trouble with the Indians, but documents like those just described suggest that the French exercised some sort of special influence over the Indians. A brief examination of the French regime in the Illinois country prior to British takeover reveals that the French in their relations with the area's Indians experienced many of the same problems confronted by their British successors after 1765. Understanding the difficulties encountered by people who were thought to be more adept at Indian affairs than the British can lend insight into British problems.

The French in the Illinois country prior to 1765 were no more immune to Indian violence than were the British later. Particularly during the last few decades of French rule, the murder and robbery of Frenchmen by Indians was a regular part of life in the Illinois country, and often this violence was related to the skin and fur trade. In 1740, for example, three Frenchmen were killed and a number of others plundered in Illinois by Osage and Missouri Indians in what appeared to be a punitive attack in reaction to dishonest trading. In 1745, the French authorities released from confinement a group of Indians who had murdered a number of French traders. Their release implies that the killings had been justified by the traders' having cheated the Indians.<sup>3</sup> In 1751, Major de Macarty-Mactigue, the French commandant at Fort de Chartres, reviewed the possibility of allowing hunters and traders to move on the Mississippi above the Illinois river, a practice which had been restricted for fear of trouble with

Sioux Indian groups. Macarty also was ordered to keep French hunters from moving on the Ohio river to avoid attacks by the Cherokee.<sup>4</sup> Richard White suggests that Indian violence and stealing functioned as normal responses to such French actions as charging too much for goods or aiding a given Indian group's enemies and that these depredations were seen by the Indians as being equivalent to the actions countered. White asserts that violence was not only a regular feature, but an integral part of Indian-white relations.<sup>5</sup> Any European group attempting to function in the Illinois country, it seems, faced the necessity of limiting and finding adequate responses to this violence, and the French in the territory seem to have been no more successful at these tasks than were their British successors.

During the British regime, imperial restrictions on settlement aimed at avoiding trouble with Indians over land conflicted with some British subjects' desires for an Illinois colony. Similarly, Illinois inhabitants during the French regime found themselves in a bind over their desire to increase the French presence in the territory. The general French policy with regards to acquiring lands was to use only unclaimed areas or to secure the permission of a given region's dominant Indian group. A more rapid expansion of French villages and agriculture, however, held out to the French several attractive features, although with this expansion would come the risk of alienating the Indians through white encroachments on Indian lands. The Illinois country, a long journey away from both New Orleans and Montreal, was expensive to supply, and some French officials felt that

a larger French community could render the territory more self-sufficient and less of a financial burden to the French empire. Just prior to the loss of Illinois to the British, the Ordonnateur of Louisiana, Jean Jaques Dabbadie, suggested that Fort de Chartres could only be properly and inexpensively maintained if a self-sufficient colony were created around it through the increase of the French population, the expansion of the region's agriculture, and the greater development of crafts there.<sup>6</sup> The value of the Illinois country as agricultural district and the possibility of its producing foodstuffs for the other French North American settlements and forts provided a second form of encouragement for expansion. The Illinois country already yielded enough grain, meat and other produce to export food to places like the French post at Natchez.<sup>7</sup> In 1751, Macarty reported that he felt he could induce the Illinois inhabitants to greatly expand their farming, if he could assure them that their produce would be bought by the government, and he asserted that the Illinois country could be made to feed much of Louisiana.<sup>8</sup> Macarty, it seems, envisioned a colony in which more inhabitants would be involved in agriculture and fewer in the Indian trade. The creation of an agricultural colony, however, held the potential to alienate the area's Indians.

The security of French interior possessions also dictated expanded Illinois settlements. By 1746, the white Illinois inhabitants still numbered only about 1,000. This paucity of settlers worried French officials, who saw the small population as a sign of the territory's vulnerability. Some French felt that expanding their settlements was

the only sure means of containing the British in the east. French officials in Louisiana might have encouraged settlement in the Illinois country by granting land to farmers and encouraging agriculture in the ways suggested by Macarty, but such steps were never taken. Increased settlement could have made the interior more secure against the British and their Indian allies, but it also might have created tension with France's own Indian allies, making the interior *less* secure. Like the British later, the French in Illinois were caught between the benefits of expanded settlement and the need to maintain amity with the Indians.

Finally, and most importantly, the French shared their British successors' great concern over the cost of maintaining good Indian relations. Far from exerting any special influence over the Illinois country's Indians, the French had to spend a great amount of wealth on presents and services for the Indians and encourage traders to keep their prices low. To understand the connection between European goods being given or traded to Indians and the politics of Indian-white alliances, one must consider the place of these goods in Indian life. Richard White, writing on the Indian groups of the Great Lakes region, including many of those taking part in events in the Illinois country, suggests that European goods possessed meaning for the Indians beyond their specific utility as kettles, guns, cloth, etc. For the Indians, trade and gift-giving represented the establishment or maintenance of social and political relationships. Strangers and enemies stole from one another, while allies, fellow villagers, and

kinspeople traded or gave presents. Between groups of Indians potentially hostile to one another, gifts and trade created bonds which could lead to alliance and inter-marriage. Within an alliance, village or kin group, gifts created social and political relationships by establishing obligation and status among the group members. Valued goods often did not remain with an individual, but rather passed to others through channels of mutual obligation, reaffirming these obligations and the structure of the community or clan as they moved along.

When European goods were introduced in considerable amounts into Indian societies, they became the preferred merchandise for the social and political uses just described. Things like blankets and kettles became vital to the maintenance of alliances among Indian groups and political relationships within groups and clans. Peace between communities and power among individuals now depended upon goods which could only be acquired from Europeans. This situation left the French with an important role to play. They were to act as "fathers" to the Indians by providing them with the means with which to maintain their social and political order and by mediating between estranged Indian groups. More than trade partners, the French represented the first actor in a system of mutual obligations which kept the interior stable. More than useful and valued objects, European goods were the material components and working parts of that system and that stability.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain whether the French fully recognized the social and political role played by the merchandize they gave or traded to the Indians, but they clearly understood that a failure on their part to adequately supply the Indians with European goods would disrupt the French-Indian alliances and render the interior a much more dangerous place for Frenchmen. The results of a reduction in French presents to the Indians and a rise in merchandize prices seen in the 1740s in the Great Lakes area serve to demonstrate this point. Throughout the first half of the 18th century, the French hold on the trade of the interior became increasingly threatened by British merchants, whose prices for European merchandize tended to be lower than those of the French. British efforts to win Indian trading partners were particularly strengthened by the possession of British stroud, inexpensive but well-made cloth which became one of the Indians' most sought-after European goods. Realizing that a loss of the trade meant the dissolution of their Indian alliances, the French authorities countered the British threat by distributing more presents, providing the services of blacksmiths and gunsmiths at the posts, and even directly subsidizing the trade by taking over several posts and maintaining prices offered at those posts at levels competitive with those offered by the British, although this meant the French took a loss on the trade.<sup>11</sup> As the British-French rivalry in the interior continued, the ever-increasing financial burden involved in maintaining Indian friendships led to calls for retrenchment among the officials of both Canada and Louisiana. In the early 1740s, Indian



presents from Canada were reduced, while, in an effort to cut the Crown's expenses in keeping up the posts, a number of posts were leased to individual merchants, who raised prices to exploit their monopolies. Furthermore, the outbreak of King George's War (1744-1748), with its accompanying British blockade, led to shortages in European merchandize and higher prices on those goods which did circulate. To the Indians, reduced presents and higher prices represented a failure on the part of the French to live up to the terms of their alliance. The French had betrayed the Indians, and this betrayal was particularly rankling for the fact that it came at a time when the French required their allies to participate in a French war. To protest this betrayal, Indians refused to pay the higher prices for European goods and robbed and murdered French traders, or else they took up trading with the British. This partial disintegration of the Indian alliances led the French eventually to return to a policy of conciliating the Indians and subsidizing the trade as in previous years.<sup>12</sup>

What is important to note in the above description of French policy is that the French chose the maintenance of their Indian alliances, so vital to the security of their North American possessions, over needed economic retrenchment. The French could not dominate their allies or force them to do their bidding. Rather, the alliance forced the French to accept the obligations of a father, even when it was highly inconvenient for them to do so. The skin and fur trade was required to bear the costs of keeping the French posts in the interior and

maintaining Indian friendships, since French authorities received their revenue from the licensing fees paid by merchants wishing to trade with the Indians.<sup>13</sup> To remain within their income, then, the French could not spend more on security than they received from the trade. Historian Norman Caldwell, writing about the Mississippi valley region in the decade prior to the Seven Years War, suggests that the revenue from licensing was sufficient to balance spending in normal times but that situations requiring increased Indian presents could easily result in expenditures outstripping income.<sup>14</sup> The French in the 18th century were faced with a British rival whose goods were less expensive than their own and with the reality that upon the distribution of these goods to the Indians relied the security of their North American possessions. In this situation, the French were forced to try to continue meeting their obligations as fathers to the Indians even when this required them to spend more than the skin and fur trade, the ostensible reason for them to be in North America in the first place, was worth to France. As General Gage remarked in 1762:

It is impossible to ascertain what were the Profits and Losses upon the French King's own Trade; no doubt that the Trade well managed would have produced considerable gains; but from the number of Commissaries and Factors employed, who have made very large Fortunes for themselves; and the immense profusion of Presents made to the Indians, I must conclude His Majesty made very little from His commerce.<sup>15</sup>

The correspondence of French officials in Illinois contains many illustrations of the problem just described. In 1750, a Wea chief named Le Grand Ongles came to Fort de Chartres to warn the French

that the young men of his community were deserting the French alliance and trading with the British as a result of the high prices of French goods. He complained that, trading with the French, "it takes a man's year's hunt to cloth him" and asked for more traders and goods to be sent to his village. In other words, Le Grand Ongles demanded that the French officials take action to increase competition for the trade of his community, which would lower the prices of French goods.<sup>16</sup> In 1752, a French official described how DeBertet, a former commandant at Fort de Chartres, had maintained amity with the Illinois country Indians by giving "the chiefs the wherewithal to maintain their prestige in the village, and with those who came to see them." This official used DeBertet's example as a counterpoint to Macarty, who was "dreaded" by the Indians because he was not as generous as his predecessors had been.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Macarty regretted the necessity of distributing Indian presents. "The Indians esteem people only in proportion as people give to them," he wrote to his superior in 1752, "or as they profit by them."<sup>18</sup> Finally, in the last year of the Seven Years War, the Illinois commandant, an officer named DeVilliers, worried that "at least fourteen thousand people have been offended by the smallness of that succor which I have been able to give them."<sup>19</sup> In the Illinois country, then, as well as in other areas of North America, the French found themselves burdened with the expensive necessity of acting as fathers to their Indian allies.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the French in the Illinois country prior to British takeover experienced the same basic

problems that the British came up against after 1765. Like the British later, the French never extended their influence to all of the region's Indian groups, nor were they able to escape Indian violence. Far from being the masters of either the Indians or the land, the Illinois French formed an isolated enclave dependent upon the maintenance of amity with Indian groups but increasingly threatened by the endeavors of British traders, whose cheaper goods, since European merchandize acted as the material sign of friendship with the Indians, disrupted not only the trade, but the very security of the French possessions. In a sense, French-British imperial rivalry in the interior took the form of competition for the friendship of Indian groups. As a consequence, Indians could wield a considerable amount of influence. This Indian influence, of course, was not the only kind of power wielded in the interior. The French could capitalize on the existence of rivalries between Indian groups just as readily as Indians could play the French off of the British. As the remarks of Le Grand Ongles demonstrate, however, Indians sometimes had the upper hand.

Comparing this picture of the French regime with that offered by the British, one is struck by how little the situation in the Illinois country actually changed from before to after the Seven Years War. Of course, the war gave the British the territory east of the Mississippi river and left the French inhabitants who removed to the west bank under Spanish, rather than French, imperial authority. But life in the Illinois country continued to be dominated by competition between groups of Europeans for the trade and friendship of Indians. In a

sense, the British struggle for empire continued long after 1763 in the Illinois country, since the British continued to be confronted by other Europeans whose actions tended to disrupt the efforts of British traders to win commerce with Indians and of British authorities to win influence. Furthermore, the close proximity of the Spanish settlements to those of the British and the permeable nature of the Mississippi as an international boundary assured that British control over their territory would always be tenuous and difficult to maintain. In this situation, the Indians continued to wield considerable influence over the British in Illinois.

After the Seven Years War, some British felt that the Indians had to be made subservient to their new overlords, that their obedience rather than their agreement had to be secured. In 1764, writing of the as yet unpacified Illinois country, Colonel Henry Bouquet remarked:

The dread of English power is in my opinion the sole motive capable of making a solid impression in [the Indians'] minds, they must be convinced with their own eyes, that it is not out of necessity, but out of Regard to them, that we offer our Alliance, and I doubt whether we shall ever root out the French Interest in that Country, till we make our appearance in it with a force sufficient to make ourselves respectable, and awe both the French and the Savages.<sup>20</sup>

As already indicated, Britain was never able to place in Illinois a military force sufficient to "awe" the Indians as per Bouquet's recommendation, and George Croghan and Edward Cole asserted to the home government that the British in Illinois did, indeed, face the necessity of making Indian alliances. The records left by British in the

Illinois country suggest that some Indians understood well the insecurity of the British position and that they played to Britain's need to maintain Indian alliances in an effort to make the British behave like better fathers. Furthermore, Indian groups acted similarly towards the Spanish, who labored under an identical necessity of securing alliances. The same Indian groups, for instance, visited both the British and Spanish authorities to ask for presents. George Morgan's record of the purchases made by the Crown for Indian presents describes visits made by parties of Osage, Iowa, Mascouten and Kickapoo, groups which also came to commandant Piernas in Spanish Illinois within weeks of his arrival.<sup>21</sup> Illinois nation groups also appear in records and correspondence as having received presents from both the Spanish and British authorities.<sup>22</sup> It is impossible to determine whether the individual parties of these Indians were the same when noted by the Spanish and British; they might have been different deputations acting independently and residing in separate villages within a given group. The frequency with which the names of the same Indian groups appear as having received gifts from both the Spanish and British, however, suggests that some of these parties were, in fact, the same on both sides of the Mississippi or that those who visited the Spanish and British came from the same villages. The Indians, then, took advantage of the presence of two rival European powers in close proximity to one another by seeking desired merchandize from both.

For British and Spanish officials, the ease with which Indians were able to cross the Mississippi's international boundary could take on great political importance. European influence with Indians in large measure depended upon European control over the merchandise Indians needed, since European goods could be used as rewards for compliance by Indians or withheld as punishment for disobedience. With both the Spanish and the British working to secure alliances in the Illinois country, however, Indians who were dissatisfied with one group of Europeans could cross the river and seek their necessities with the other. Records suggest that the close proximity of the British and Spanish territories allowed Indians who were hostile to one of the European powers to remain so by giving them an alternative source of needed goods. To take one example, in the autumn of 1767, a party of around 120 Missouri Indians came to Fort de Chartres from the west side of the Mississippi to proclaim their friendliness towards the British and their hope, in the words of the Baynton, Wharton and Morgan business journal, of "ratifying the Preliminaries of Trade." They also "beg'd they might be pitied so as to [help] them prosecute their Winter Hunt."<sup>23</sup> For the Indians, the trade in European goods represented a larger social and political relationship. As such, the party of Missouri, it seems, were offering the Illinois British their alliance. If the British approved of such a relationship, they would demonstrate their friendship by acting like good fathers and giving the Missouri the guns, shot, powder and other items they needed to carry out their winter hunt. Cole did, in fact, distribute presents to the

party, and it seems likely that the Indians' attempt to secure goods from the British was aided by the fact that the Missouri came from the Spanish side of the river. Such an ally would become valuable in the event of an Anglo-Spanish war. The Spanish authorities' relations with the Missouri were often very troubled. In 1772, commandant Piernas described them as "daring and insolent" and blamed their behavior on their closeness to the British.<sup>24</sup> The Spanish feared that the British would claim a right to passage on the Missouri river if British traders were not kept from trafficking on it, and the amity between the British and the Missouri Indians, whose territory was adjacent the river,<sup>25</sup> must have deepened Spanish anxiety.

The Baynton, Wharton and Morgan journal contains a number of entries very similar to that concerning the visit of the Missouri party. In December of 1767, for example, a party of Kaskaskia living on the west side of the Mississippi came to express their friendship for the British and ask for European goods to help them in their winter hunt. About that time, a group of Osage visited with the same intention.<sup>26</sup> These visits, along with others noted in the journals, exhibit a pattern. The Indians would declare their loyalty to the British, despite the fact that they lived in Spanish territory, and then they would ask for presents to help in their hunting. The British, needing Indian allies and undoubtedly attracted to alliances with groups residing in their rival's territory, would oblige them. The manner in which the Indians requested aid suggests that they were keenly aware of the influence they could wield over the British. The Spanish, after all, also



distributed goods. These Indians, believing that it would elicit British generosity, offered themselves as possible allies within Spanish Illinois.

The Spanish, too, were visited by Indians who resided in their imperial rival's territory. In the autumn of 1769, commandant Piernas noted visits by parties of Potawatomi, Fox, Piankashaw, Kickapoo and Mascouten, groups who resided in the British territory.<sup>27</sup> In 1777, the Spanish authorities compiled a list of Indians from the British territory who regularly received presents from the Spanish. This list included the Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, and several Illinois nation groups. What is important to note about these lists is that they suggest the Spanish were allied with some of the Indians most troublesome to the British. As previously mentioned, General Gage considered the Potawatomi and the Wabash Indians, who included the Piankashaw, great obstacles to the exercise of British authority in the Illinois country. The availability to these Indians of European goods from a source other than the British, it seems, helped them to continue their resistance to British power. The Sauk and Fox in 1768 were rumored to be preparing for war against the British, but the 1777 Spanish list described the Sauk as so friendly that they protected and helped French and Spanish hunters on the Mississippi, while it described the Fox as unquestionably reliable.<sup>28</sup> These good relations offered the Spanish possible allies in an Anglo-Spanish conflict and allowed the Indians to escape dependence upon the British for European goods.

The Baynton, Wharton and Morgan business journals display another method through which some Indian groups were able to influence the British to act more generously as fathers. The journal recording Edward Cole's Indian affairs account describes the following Indian visit in March, 1768:

To the Black Dog a Peoria Chief & twenty Warriors, who came to acquaint their Father, that they had been invited by the Chipewas, Iawas, & Putewatomis to a Grand Council, which was to be held very soon at the head of the Illinois River, but they gave for answer, that if they had any business with their Nation, they might come to them. Expressed the greatest friendship & surety of the earliest intelligence if there was danger. They beg'd to be assisted to finish their hunt for this season.<sup>29</sup>

Like the Indian parties described above who came to Cole from the west side of the Mississippi, the Peoria visited with the purpose of obtaining shot, powder and other supplies they needed for their hunting. Although they declared their loyalty and requested these supplies in a beseeching manner, the Peoria, in a sense, were threatening the British and demanding goods. They informed their Father that they had been approached by Indians hostile to the British and that, while refusing to go to the council, they had left open the possibility of their having relations with these British enemies at a later time. In effect, the Peoria reminded the British that their alliance was founded upon mutual obligation and that, with so many enemies about, the British could ill afford to lose the allies they possessed. The Peoria would continue to act as allies, refusing the advances of Britain's enemies and watching for danger, if the British

continued to act as proper fathers. Cole, for his part, responded to the Peorias' requests with £27 worth of presents. At about the same time as the Peoria visit, the journal records the arrival of a group of Missouri who had settled with the Peoria on the east side of the Mississippi:

they came to take their Father by the hand, assuring him they would not listen to the invitation of those Indians who are badly disposed, but would continue firm to the English, prayed for Assistance to carry them to their Hunting Ground.

These Indians, too, had been invited to join groups hostile to the British, to repudiate their British alliance. Like the Peoria, the Missouri tied their continued amity to the British supplying them with goods to use in their hunt. As long as these goods were forthcoming, it seems, they would not listen to Britain's enemies. Cole presented this party with £36 worth of shot, powder, clothing, rum and other merchandize.<sup>30</sup> The presence of hostile Indian groups provided the British with a constant reminder of the need to secure Indian allies and gave the Indians a lever with which to persuade the British to act like better fathers.

Historian Arthur Ray, writing of the Hudson Bay Company's Indian relations during the time of French-British rivalry prior to the Seven Years War, asserts that Indians used the state of competition existing between French and British traders to induce these traders to offer better merchandize at lower prices. The Indians worded their requests as pleas for kindness, but they were specific about what they wanted and often claimed to traders of one nation that the other

nation's merchants were selling better or cheaper goods. With the French and British working to deprive each other of trading partners and allies, the Indians found themselves in a position to dictate some of the terms of their relations with the Europeans.<sup>31</sup> The Illinois country after 1765, it seems, provided Indian groups with a similar situation. The war had reapportioned the western territory, but Illinois, part of the frontier of the Spanish and British possessions, remained a battleground for the campaigns of traders and imperial powers to secure Indian allies. As such, Indians could keep the Europeans acting generously by appealing to their anxiety over the close presence of their enemies, both whites and other Indian groups. The Indians, it is true, were dependent upon European goods, but, until a single European power could completely dominate the interior, this dependence was balanced by the Europeans' own dependence upon Indian allies.

During their decade in the Illinois country, the British in various ways attempted to lessen the Indian influence over them and reduce the expense involved in meeting the demands of some Indian groups for goods. William Johnson's 1764 plan for the Indian department, while it recognized the need to provide the Indians with goods, represented an attempt to systematize Indian relations in such a way that the expenses of the Indian department could be kept within a defined budget. In the British colonies prior to and during the Seven Years War, a variety of agencies had distributed Indian presents: individual colonists such as traders, the British government and

military, the colonial administrations. Johnson tried to rationalize Indian relations and eliminate wasteful expenditure.<sup>32</sup> For his northern department, he projected that a little less than £11,000 would be raised annually through the plan's new duties on the pelt trade. With £4,000 allotted for "An annual present for the Nations in the Northern District," in addition to salaries and other expenses, the department would spend about as much as it received from the tax.<sup>33</sup> This new tax, of course, was never levied, but even with the tax, additional presents of any substantial amount would have taken the department beyond its income. Johnson, it seems, hoped that the annual presents would be enough to satisfy the Indians and that the other aspects of his plan would lead to a state of peace and stability in which additional gifts would not be required. He hoped that, if the British kept to the formula of his program, it would control expenses while helping the British to control the interior.

In addition to Johnson's attempt to regularize and control the cost of Indian relations in the West, in general, Illinois country officials worked to blunt the Indians' demands for goods. In 1768, Captain Forbes, the commander at Fort de Chartres, complained to General Gage:

I have for some time observed that the more Presents [the Indians] receive, the oftner they Return, and are less contented; and that their chief dependence rests more upon his Majesty's Bounty than their own Industry; for while they are provided with necessary's, and Provisions, they never move from their village, but begging and hanging upon the inhabitants, which gives them such a habit of idleness (particularly the four Tribes in this District) that they are

by constant use of Spiritous Liquors become Effeminate and Debilitated: so much that nothing can be apprehended, from such a Dastardly Race of Cowards, who impute, the Bounty they receive, proceeds from fear not from Love.

Edward Cole's generosity probably elicited this complaint, and Forbes suggested that gift-giving be restricted and expressed his support for the idea of distributing only annual presents.<sup>34</sup> Presumably, this practice would alter the way in which the Indians viewed the British gifts, making them see that the British gave out of regard for the Indians, rather than obligation to them. Forbes' successor, Colonel Wilkins, attempted a similar feat. In the autumn of 1768, George Morgan wrote to John Baynton that Wilkins, having taken over the management of Indian affairs from the newly-unemployed Cole, had promised to distribute presents to the Indians according to the quantity of skins and furs they brought in for trade, a policy of which Morgan greatly approved.<sup>35</sup> Rather than a Father's obligation, gifts would become a reward for services rendered. Presents would be distributed in proportion to how much the recipients profited the British, so a balance would be struck between the cost of maintaining Indian alliances and the commercial benefits of those alliances, while the British would be able to dictate the terms of their relationships with the Indians.

None of these attempts to change the nature of Indian relations so as to lessen British dependence upon expensive gift-giving succeeded in the Illinois country. As already discussed, Edward Cole found it necessary to distribute presents in amounts which far outstripped Johnson's initial expectations, and the middle path laid down in the

1764 program between economy and successful Indian relations proved unviable. Furthermore, Forbes and Wilkins' subsequent attempts to change the relationship whereby the Indians viewed gifts as the British obligation to them also failed. The Baynton, Wharton and Morgan records show that, even after Cole's departure in 1768, the Illinois British gave presents on a variety of occasions and more frequently than once a year, and, although Wilkins reduced the expense of gift-giving by relying on presents of cheap alcohol, he was unable to follow through, it seems, on his promise to give only in proportion with the quantity of pelts brought in by the Indians.<sup>36</sup> In 1772, for example, Wilkins met with a party of 60 Kickapoo from a group who had been moving about the immediate area of the Illinois villages and threatening whites who tried to go out to gather their livestock. Richard Winston, writing to Philadelphia, described the Kickapoo as coming "not with a good Grace," but Wilkins gave them valuable presents, anyway.<sup>37</sup> That Wilkins could reduce the magnitude and quality of British gifts without a commensurate increase in Indian violence against the British suggests that the ability of the Indian groups to influence the terms of their British relations lessened over time. By the opening of the American Revolution, however, the British in Illinois had not escaped the necessity of giving frequent gifts, nor changed the relationship whereby the Indians were able to demand them.

In many cases, it was the Indians who dictated the nature of Indian-white relations in the Illinois country, both prior to and following the Seven Years War. Certainly, the Indians came to need the Europeans. The stability within their communities and the alliances between groups depended upon European merchandize, since it functioned in gift-giving and trade as the material sign of political and social relationships. During both the French and British regimes, however, certain Indian groups were able to manipulate the Europeans in order to obtain needed goods as readily as the Europeans were able to use those goods to influence the Indians. The Illinois country provided a situation in which different groups of white men competed for Indian allies. In this situation, Indians could make demands upon the Europeans and influence the nature of their relations with the whites, since there always existed the possibility that a European's allies could go over to his enemies, both rival Europeans and hostile Indians. Statements like those of Colonel Bouquet and Captain Forbes suggest that some British understood well the influence Indians could wield over the British in the interior and that they resented it. In the Illinois country, the British attempted to break this influence by altering the meaning of the gifts they gave to the Indians. They tried to change the gifts from an obligation the British owed to their allies to a reward for services rendered the British by the Indians. Or else, they thought to deemphasize the role of Indian presents by distributing them only once a year, which presumably would teach the Indians not to expect or demand more



frequent gifts and, in this way, alter the terms of British-Indian relations to the whites' benefit. The British, however, failed to change the Indians' conception of gift-giving and, like the French before them, were never able to completely dominate the territory's Indians. The British secured some Indian alliances, and they never faced a concerted effort on the part of Indian groups to drive them from the region, but they continued to labor under the necessity of behaving like fathers, and certain Indian groups continued to exert great influence over the terms of their British relations. While the Indian groups of the Illinois country were forced to live with the British, the British never fully controlled the Indians.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>BWM, Cole to Johnson, November 12, 1766.

<sup>2</sup>JP, 8:285, Gage to Johnson, October 1, 1771.

<sup>3</sup>Surrey, 359-360; Caldwell, 74.

<sup>4</sup>IHC, 29:316-317, Macarty's orders, 1751.

<sup>5</sup>White, 75-76.

<sup>6</sup>IHC, 10:209, Dabbadie to "the Minister," January 10, 1764.

<sup>7</sup>Surrey, 289; Belting, 67-68.

<sup>8</sup>IHC, 29:279-280, Macarty to Rouille, May 27, 1751.

- <sup>9</sup>Caldwell, 35-36, 49-50.
- <sup>10</sup>White, 94-105.
- <sup>11</sup>ibid., 120-123; Stevens, 18-19.
- <sup>12</sup>White, 199-200, 209-211; Caldwell, 25-27, 53-55.
- <sup>13</sup>Eccles, 345-346.
- <sup>14</sup>Caldwell, 32.
- <sup>15</sup>MPHC, 19:16, Gage to Amhearst, March 20, 1762.
- <sup>16</sup>IHC, 29:213, Raymond to LaJonquiere, May 22, 1750.
- <sup>17</sup>ibid., 29:720-724, DeGuyenne to Vaudreuill, September 10, 1752.
- <sup>18</sup>ibid., 29:480, Macarty to Rouille, February 1, 1752.
- <sup>19</sup>ibid., 10:54, DeVilliers to Dabbadie, December 1, 1763.
- <sup>20</sup>MPHC, 19:284, Bouquet to Gage, November 30, 1764.
- <sup>21</sup>BWM, Crown account, November-December, 1767, for Osage, Iowa and Mascouten, July, 1769, for Kickapoo; Houck, *Spanish Regime*, 1:74-75, Piernas to O'Reilly, October 31, 1769.
- <sup>22</sup>BWM, Crown account, December, 1766, March, 1768; Houck, *Spanish Regime*, 1:145-147, Report on Indian Tribes that regularly come from the English district for presents, November 15, 1777.
- <sup>23</sup>BWM, Crown account, September, 1767.
- <sup>24</sup>Kinnaird, 1:205, Piernas to Unzaga, July 4, 1772.

<sup>25</sup>ibid., 1:228, list of the nations of the Missouri river, May 19, 1775.

<sup>26</sup>BWM, Crown account, November-December, 1767.

<sup>27</sup>Houck, *Spanish Regime*, 1:74-75, Piernas to O'Reilly, October 31, 1769.

<sup>28</sup>ibid., 1:145-147, Report on the Indian Tribes that regularly come from the English district for presents, November 15, 1777; IHC, 16:223-226, Morgan to Baynton and Wharton, April 5, 1768.

<sup>29</sup>BWM, Crown account, March 5, 1768.

<sup>30</sup>ibid., Crown account, March 12, 1768.

<sup>31</sup>Arthur Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the 18th Century," in Carol M. Judd and Arthur Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions* (Toronto, 1980), 255, 266.

<sup>32</sup>Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Wilderness Politics and Indian Gifts* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1950), 36-38.

<sup>33</sup>IHC, 10:341-342, Johnson's report on the Indian department, autumn, 1764.

<sup>34</sup>ibid., 16:340, "The Illinois" to Gage, 1768.

<sup>35</sup>ibid., 16:447, Morgan to Baynton, October 30, 1768.

<sup>36</sup>BWM, Crown account, 1770. Typical entries in the account for Wilkins include: "To the Kaskaskia Nation on two of their young men being killed supposed by the Chickasawa-3 gals. Rum;" "to Delivered a party of Indians by Col. Wilkins desire 2 1/2 gall. Rum for taking 2 deserters;" and presents to sick Indians.

<sup>37</sup>BWM, Winston to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, September 12, 1772.

## CONCLUSION

After the British victories against the French in the Seven Years War and the Indian confederation of Pontiac's uprising, British imperial authorities attempted to impose upon the Illinois country an order which, to their minds, would secure the full realization of their victories. The imperial efforts involved two related goals. First, the Illinois country would be made to profit the Empire through the trade in skins and furs. Under the imperial program of management, this goal would be achieved by limiting British settlement in the region, thereby reserving the territory for pelt traders, and by establishing regulations which would ensure that the profits of the trade remained in the Empire. Second, British officials would keep the territory peaceful and securely under British authority by fostering amicable relations with its various groups of Indians. The limits on settlement would serve this goal by allowing the British to avoid disruptions with the Indians over white encroachments on Indian lands, while imperial trade regulations would allow British officials to oversee the commerce so as to ensure that traders would not alienate Indians by cheating them. The imperial program would justify Britain's conquest of the Illinois country by making it a secure possession and an economic asset to the Empire.

The Illinois country, however, confronted the imperial program with great obstacles. British officials attempted to enforce the

imperial trade policies, but the regulations proved ill-fitted to conditions in the territory. Europeans and Indians in British Illinois, for instance, carried on much of their trade at the Indians' villages, rather than at the posts as demanded under the imperial rules. Traders from the Spanish side of the Mississippi river invaded the British territory in search of pelts, while many of the French traders still residing in British Illinois continued their accustomed practice of procuring skins and furs at Indian villages. Most of the pelts secured through this trade passed to New Orleans and then to France or Spain, rather than to a British port. British traders like George Morgan, for their part, failed to dominate the trade, and this failure led them adopt practices which sometimes contravened the imperial regulations, such as when Morgan attempted to supply traders from the Spanish territory with British goods. Rather than creating a system whereby both the British empire and traders in Illinois could benefit from the commerce, the imperial trade regulations set British authorities and traders at odds with one another. The Illinois country could not be made to fit the imperial program, while the efforts of British officials to enforce the regulations hindered the attempts of traders to secure personal profits.

Indian relations confronted the British with a similar predicament in the Illinois country. The peace and security of the territory demanded that the British maintain alliances with at least some of the region's Indian groups. British authorities were able to do this, and a major Indian war like Pontiac's uprising did not break out. The cost of

maintaining these Indian alliances, however, threatened to be more than the territory was worth to Great Britain. The presence of the Spanish settlements just across the river and of Indian enemies throughout the region reinforced the British need for allies and left open the possibility that these Indian groups, if dissatisfied with the British, could go over to Britain's enemies. In this situation, some Indian groups were able to capitalize on British insecurity and demand greater presents and aid than the British authorities might otherwise have been willing to provide. The British in Illinois repeatedly attempted to weaken Indian influence by changing the nature of the role gifts played in white-Indian relations, but the need to secure alliances was always greater than the need to alter the power relationship, and British authorities continued to give gifts on the Indians' terms. In this manner, certain Indian groups retained a measure of influence over the terms of their relations with the British.

Stalemate characterized the Illinois country in the years between the end of the Seven Years War and the outbreak of the American Revolution: stalemate between the policies of imperial authorities and the desires individual British subjects in Illinois, between British traders like George Morgan and their French competitors, between British officials trying to reduce expenses and Indian groups trying to gain from their British relations. Where the French had failed to halt the British conquest of North America in the Seven Years War, the actions of French traders, Indian groups, and the British, themselves,

stalled the realization of the benefits of that conquest in the Illinois country.



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